# IN THE HANDS OF THE MALAYS

G. A. HENTY

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G. Hendley.

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# In the Hands of the Malays

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# In the Hands of the Malays

## And Other Stories

BY

G. A. HENTY

Author of "The Cat of Bubastes" "With Kitchener in the Soudan"
"Beric the Briton" "For Name and Fame" &c.




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# IN THE HANDS OF THE MALAYS

ON the 1st of May, 1669, a man was standing at the edge of the shore of a rocky island, one of a group of a dozen or so similar in character, lying off the south-western portion of Sumatra. It would have been difficult to fix his nationality. The outline of the face was Arab; the colour of the skin showed that though one or other of his parents had been white, the other had been either Arab or Malay. He stood looking after a Dutch vessel, carrying guns, like all those engaged at that time in the Eastern trade. His hands were clenched, and he was regarding the ship with an expression of malignant hate.

Close by where he stood, a roughly-made grave piled with rocks, with a wooden cross standing at its head, showed that a Christian had been buried there. Any seaman of the time who had seen the man would have rightly concluded that he had been marooned for some crime committed on board

the ship that was sailing away, and their judgment would have been a correct one.

The *Dordrecht*, a Dutch merchantman carrying sixteen guns, was chartered by a dozen rich citizens of Holland, who had sailed in her, determined to take up land, to settle, and to cultivate the plants that grew in the island of Java on a large scale. Some were traders, others had been tempted by the tales of the wealth of the island, where the Dutch had, fifty years before, acquired a settlement by conquest. The ship had touched at the Cape to take in a fresh supply of water and fill up with provisions. They had lost their cook overboard in a storm, and thought themselves fortunate in engaging in his place a man who had served with the governor there, and who was recommended as thoroughly understanding his work, whose only drawback was that he possessed a passionate and revengeful disposition, which had led to his dismissal from his office. This, in a vessel carrying a strong crew and some fifty soldiers, was not considered of any importance, and the man speedily justified his recommendation in other respects.

"I don't like the fellow," the lieutenant in command of the troops said to his subaltern one day, when they were a month out from the Cape. "I

grant you that he is a good cook, but if I offended him I should not care to touch any food he handled. The fellow is capable of poisoning a whole crew to get his revenge on one of them."

The other laughed. "I grant he has an evil face, Van Houten, but I think that you are a little prejudiced. I own, though, that I felt inclined to knock him down myself this afternoon, when he stood at the door of the galley staring at Fraulein Meyers through his half-closed eyes. He put me in mind of a cat watching a mouse."

"Yes, I have noticed it myself several times," the other said hotly. "It is hardly a thing one can take up. The fellow might declare that it was not her that he was looking at, but that he was merely meditating; and to tell you the truth, although I am no coward, I would rather not make a mortal enemy of that man. I have no fancy for being stabbed to the heart while I am asleep. If he said or did anything insolent it would be another matter. I would have him ironed and sent down below, and kept there till we got to Batavia."

The other laughed again. "You would get into hot water with all the passengers, Van Houten; the fellow cooks so well that they are always singing his praises."

"Yes, there has been a great improvement in the diet since we left the Cape; but still, even at the risk of displeasing the worshipful passengers, I would put the fellow in irons did he give me the shadow of an excuse. I should not be surprised if he did so, for of late I have observed a malignant look on his face as his eyes fell upon me. It is absurd to suppose that the hound feels any ill-will towards me because I am a good deal with Fraulein Meyers. The assumption is too monstrous, but I really don't see any other reason for him to dislike me. I have never spoken to him since he came on board."

"Perhaps the matter will be taken out of your hands altogether," the other said. "I heard the mate having a row with him this morning, and certainly he is not likely to put up with any nonsense; and he is strong enough to pick the Arab, or whatever he is, up with one hand and throw him overboard."

"I am not quite so sure about that, Erasmus. He looks small beside the mate, I acknowledge, but I should say that what there is of him is all sinew and muscle, and it would be like a fight between a panther and a buffalo."

A week later the passengers were down at

dinner. They were in high spirits, for the hills of Sumatra were dimly visible on the port side, and another two or three days' sail would take them to Batavia. Suddenly a shout was heard, and then a sudden uproar. The captain and Van Houten ran up. On the deck lay the mate stabbed to the heart, while the cook, with a knife in his hand, was struggling in the grasp of half a dozen soldiers.

"How did this happen?" the captain asked as he came up to the group.

"I don't know how it began," one of the crew said, "but the cook was standing at the door of his galley, the mate said something to him, and the cook burst into a volley of curses. The mate knocked him down, but he was up in a moment. With his knife in his hand he flung himself upon the mate, and the latter fell, as you see. Two or three of us who were close by threw ourselves on the cook, but it was hard work to hold him, for he fought like a wild cat, and he had slashed some of us before we could get hold of his wrists."

"Drop that knife!" the captain said sternly; but the man was half-mad with passion and continued to struggle desperately. Van Houten caught up a belaying pin from its place and struck him heavily on his fingers. The knife dropped to the deck,

and one of the soldiers snatched it up. The man instantly ceased struggling and stood impassive, although his breast still heaved with his exertion; then he said in a quiet voice to the young officer: "That is another I owe you, Van Houten, but I will get even with you one day."

"Your threat is an idle one," the captain said. "At sunset you shall swing from the yard-arm. Tie him up tightly, men, and fasten him to the mast. Carry the mate's body forward, and throw a flag over it. We will bury him after we have done with this fellow."

Going below, the captain briefly stated what had occurred.

"But you will not hang him, captain, will you?" one of the lady passengers said. "It is awful that the mate should have been killed, but you see he gave the most terrible provocation. It would be a sad ending to our voyage if a man were hanged on board. Could you not hand him over to the authorities when we get to Batavia?"

"No, madam. I certainly might do so, but the chances are that the fellow would make his escape long before his trial was concluded. I know that he speaks Malay, and he would find some means to get some natives outside to help him, and I do not

care to run the risk of the fate that has befallen the mate. I should hardly think that Van Houten would care about it either. I fancy that he would be the first victim, by the look that the fellow gave him."

An hour later the captain went up to Van Houten.

"The women have been begging me not to hang that fellow. As it is evident that I shall gain much ill-will if I do, for he has well satisfied them, and as I have no mind to risk my life and yours if he should get free at Batavia, I have a good mind to land him on one of the islets ahead. I might heave the ship to for an hour, land the poor mate and bury him, and leave the scoundrel there. It will amount to the same thing in the end, for as the rocks are thirty miles from the coast there would be no chance of his getting off, for it would be very improbable that any native craft will come along this way: they always keep close inshore. That way one would avoid a scene with the women; and I own that there is something in what they say. The deed was done in a moment of passion, and under great provocation, for Werter was a strong fighter and a hasty man, and a blow from his fist was no joke."

"Just as you think fit, captain. It will give him

time to think over his misdeeds, which no doubt are pretty numerous, for I dare say his career has been a black one. It certainly has, if his face does not belie him greatly. Still, I would much prefer to see him hung."

Accordingly an hour later the vessel was hove to. The remains of the mate, covered with a flag, were placed in a boat; the cook, still bound, was made to descend into it; and the second mate and eight well-armed sailors, with picks and shovels, took their places in it. The ship's carpenter had made a rough cross, which he handed to the second mate. When they reached the shore, two men were left there with the cook; the others dug a shallow grave, laid the body in it, refilled it, and heaped great stones upon it, and then stuck the cross in the sands at its head. The Arab was brought ashore, and the ropes that bound him were unfastened. The crew and second mate took their places in the boat and rowed off to the ship, which was put on her way again as soon as they reached it. As far as they could make out the figure of the man on shore, he was standing where they had left him, gazing at the ship. On the following day there was a heavy gale offshore, and the ship was blown some little distance out of her course.

In two days, however, the wind fell, and the *Dordrecht* arrived five days later at Batavia. The passengers landed at once, and the captain went ashore on the following day with his log-book. "Is there any special item to which you wish to call my attention?" the official asked.

"This is the only one, sir." And he pointed to the last page. "Cook stabbed the mate."

"And you marooned him on one of the rocky islands off the coast of Sumatra. Why did you not hang him?"

"Well, sir, we had a good many lady passengers on board, and they all rather took the man's part, on the ground that the mate had knocked him down, and that he stabbed him in the heat of passion; but really I think it was because they had been highly satisfied with his cooking during the voyage."

"What nationality was the man?"

"A mixture. He spoke Dutch perfectly well, but his features were Arab rather than European."

The official did not speak for nearly a minute. "What height was he?"

"About the average height," the captain said with some surprise in his tone; "broader than Arabs generally are, but lithe and sinewy. I

used to think there must be some Malay blood in him."

The official got up and took down a book from a shelf. "How long had he been at the Cape before you hired him, do you know?" he asked as he turned over the leaves.

"I did not question him. He said that he had been six months cook at the governor's house, and that was good enough for me."

"Had he any particular mark on his face?" the official asked, as he found the entry for which he was in search.

"He had a scar on one cheek," the captain said, "a white line, as if it had been a clean cut with a knife."

"That is the man, then. Your first description at once struck me. I will read to you what is written here. 'Middle height; age about thirty-five; clean shaven; very strong and active figure. Nationality uncertain, believed to be Arab on the father's side by Dutch or Portuguese woman, probably some Malay blood. Long thin scar across one cheek.'"

"That is the man to a T."

"Well, captain, you have missed five hundred pounds and the great credit you would have gained

if you had brought in that man dead or alive. He was the boldest and most savage of the pirates who infest these seas, and is feared by the native traders as much as by the Dutch merchants who trade with the East. He never spared a man, white or brown, that fell into his hands. Sometimes he would sail alone, sometimes with a score of native craft. With these he would land on one of the islands or on the mainland, burn, plunder, and murder, and carry off into slavery the young men and women. The last we heard of him was two years ago. A boat was picked up with two men still alive in her; they were the sole survivors of one of our vessels that had been captured by him. He had transferred the greater part of his own crew to her. Every soul on board our ship had been murdered, with the exception of these two men, who managed to conceal themselves among the cargo, and had, while the pirates were carousing, dropped into a boat that lay alongside, and escaped. In the morning they could see their own ship bearing west while the original pirate was making for the north-east.

"From that day nothing was heard of the Arab. It was supposed that he had intended to cruise near the Cape. There his appearance would enable him unsuspected to approach ships. Six months later,

however, a ship arriving here brought news that the *Heldin*, which was the name of the vessel that they had taken, had been lost with all hands some forty miles from the Cape. The natives had brought down a story of a wreck having occurred near their village, and a craft was despatched to the spot, and found the shore strewn with timber. Among the wreckage was the stern of a boat bearing the *Heldin's* name, and an empty keg also stamped with it. That seemed to settle the question, and the wreck had taken place just about the time that the pirate would, had she held on the course on which she was last seen, have arrived off the Cape. There is not much doubt now that the "Sea Tiger", for so he was always called, managed to reach the shore and make his way to the town, and when he found that he was the sole survivor, and no suspicion existed that the ship had changed hands before she was wrecked, found some sort of employment until, by means no doubt of forged testimonials, he obtained a position in the household of the governor. I must at once inform the council, who are now sitting, of what has taken place."

An hour later a government craft, with twenty soldiers on board, sailed from Batavia, taking with it the second mate of the *Dordrecht* to point out to

them the island upon which the pirate had been landed and the spot where they had set him on shore. She returned a week later. No traces of the man they sought had been found; but on the shore was a deep mark, evidently caused by a native boat having been pulled up there during the storm. The sand around was greatly trampled, there were chips of wood as if some repairs had been done; and there was little doubt that after the storm had abated and the craft been sufficiently repaired, the whole party had sailed away. The news that the famous pirate known as the "Sea Tiger" had escaped and was again at large, caused great consternation among the merchant community of Batavia.

The captain of the *Dordrecht* was severely censured by the authorities, and was so overwhelmed with reproaches by the merchants that he was glad indeed when he had discharged his cargo and taken in another and left the island behind him. The female passengers, whose intercession had saved the pirate's life, came in for some share of the unpopularity of the captain, and were made to regret bitterly the part they had taken in the affair. Three months later reports were brought by natives of the doings of a piratical fleet, who had taken and sunk numbers of native craft, had landed at

various points on the coast of Sumatra, and destroyed Dutch factories. The natives who had escaped from these massacres all agreed in stating that the leader of this fleet was the dreaded "Sea Tiger" of whom nothing had been heard for so long. Then three Dutch ships which were due did not arrive, and one which came in reported that they had seen a glow of light in mid-ocean. It could have been caused only by a ship on fire very many miles away.

The ship had been headed in this direction, but the wind was contrary and the light had disappeared suddenly. They, however, kept on their course, and although the next morning they came upon some wreckage of charred timber, and had cruised for some hours in the neighbourhood, they had seen no signs of boats. Then rapidly came in the news that descents had been made upon various points on the mainland, and one morning a horseman rode in, saying that a landing had been effected at a point about thirty miles from Batavia. Plantations had been destroyed, all the white colonists killed, and able-bodied natives carried off as slaves. There was only one vessel of war at Batavia, but the governor and council took up two merchantmen that happened to be there, and put on board of

each fifty soldiers, together with a strong crew to work the guns. Lieutenant Van Houten was in command of the soldiers on one of these vessels. His engagement to Fraulein Meyers had now been announced. Her father was settled on a plantation that he had purchased from a colonist whose health had suffered from the climate, and who was now returning home. It was twelve miles to the east of the town, and situated near the sea-shore.

He had been appointed to the command at his own request. He had more than shared in the general consternation at the pirate's escape. He was not one, however, to blame the captain. Certainly the Arab had acted under great provocation, and he knew that had he been in the captain's place he would have yielded to the solicitations of the ladies, especially as it seemed that the death of the culprit was as certain as, if slower than, that by the rope. He himself would vastly have preferred to have seen the man hung. He recognized how dangerous an enemy he was; and as soon as he heard of his escape he became anxious about the safety of his betrothed, remembering as he did the evident admiration that this scoundrel had felt for her. He had even begged her father to move into the town until the depredations of the pirates had been

arrested. But Mr. Meyers had scoffed at the idea. "It is just the time for nutmeg picking. It is quite absurd. There is no other plantation within three miles, and even if they came along here, it would not pay them to land for the plunder of a solitary house."

His daughter was very tearful when she heard that her lover was going out in search of the pirate. "There is no occasion for you to go," she said. "Why should you have volunteered for such dangerous service?"

"Because I have a particular wish to capture or kill this pirate. I have no doubt that he has a strong enmity against all connected with the *Dordrecht*, and I shall never feel comfortable so long as he roves the sea. Even putting our own case aside, see the frightful destruction that he is causing. He is depopulating islands, massacring peaceable natives, capturing ships, and murdering all on board. There is not an officer here but is burning to take part in his capture. Besides, I feel he has a particular animosity against me. How it arises does not matter. I know that he has that feeling, and so long as he is abroad and powerful my life is not safe, even in the streets of Batavia."

After this, his betrothed had no further objection

to his going. It was known that the pirate's rendezvous was on the east coast of Sumatra, where he had made an alliance with a tribe at war with its neighbours, and had aided in conquering the latter; and it was in that direction that the three ships steered their course, hoping to encounter the pirates as they came down the Straits of Malacca on one of their expeditions. They cruised backwards and forwards for a week without seeing a sail, save a few native boats creeping along close to the shore. One morning, however, the look-out at the mast-head saw a number of sail in the distance. Among them were two vessels much larger than the others. These were doubtless the Dutch ships that had been captured; the others were native craft, most of them rowing, as could be seen as the sun flashed on their oars. Preparations were at once made for battle, for there was no change in the direction of the pirate flotilla after it was certain that they must have seen the Dutch fleet.

"It almost looks", Van Houten said to Erasmus, his young subaltern, who was again with him, "as if they had received information as to our starting in pursuit of them, otherwise there would surely have been some hesitation when they first saw us, some consultation whether they should attack us

or not. Unless I am greatly mistaken one of the ships is the *Dordrecht*. She was only three weeks at Batavia. The fellow must have lost no time in getting allies among the native princes in order to waylay her when she came out again. She would be the first object of his vengeance."

"She certainly looks like her," the other agreed. "Well, if so, there is one more debt to be paid off. The captain was a good old fellow, and I liked the second mate very much. I hope both of them fell before the vessel was seized, for we may be sure that they would not have had an easy death if they were captured. It will be a tough fight, for I have no doubt that the boats are crammed with men. There is one thing which I do not expect they have—many guns, except in the two ships; but counting only fifty men a boat—and no doubt many of them carry a hundred—we shall be tremendously outnumbered if they get alongside."

"Yes. It is a little unfortunate that there is not more wind; then we might keep away from their boats, and pepper them hotly. As it is, they can move three feet to our one."

As soon as the pirates were within range, the three Dutch vessels opened fire. They were un-

answered for a short time, for the two pirate ships had been outstripped by the prahs. But several of the latter now took them in tow, and presently they began to return the fire with their bow-guns. Although several of the prahs were sunk, and some so badly damaged that they had to drop behind, the others pressed on.

At a signal from the commander of the ship of war his consorts now brought their heads round so that they lay nearly in a line, with their broadsides to the pirates.

With loud shouts, beating of drums, and the blowing of horns, the prahs came along at racing speed. Instead of using round-shot, the guns were now crammed to the muzzle with bags of bullets, and these did terrible execution. But the Malays did not relax their efforts, and presently dashed alongside of the Dutch ships. Soon a desperate fight took place. The soldiers kept up an incessant musketry-fire as fast as they could load; the sailors cut down those who attempted to board; and the Malays threw showers of spears, stink-pots, and missiles of all kinds.

For half an hour the fight continued, and the result was still in doubt, when there was a crash, and the decks were swept by a storm of bullets.

Scarce noticed while the struggle was going on, the two pirate ships had come up, passed ahead of the Dutch vessels, and had sailed close up on the opposite side to that on which the fight with the prahs was taking place. The pirates had shifted all their guns so as to bear on the Dutch vessels. Each mounted sixteen cannon, and these poured in their contents simultaneously. The effect was terrible! More than half the defenders were swept away, and a minute later the pirate ships were alongside; and as the Dutch turned to repel the storm of figures leaping on to their decks, the men in the canoes crowded up on the other side. The Dutch soldiers and sailors fought with desperation. They knew there was no quarter, and held out to the last. But in five minutes the ship of war and the one next to her had been captured, and the last of the defenders slain.

The ship that carried Van Houten was at the end of the line, and had up to now been only attacked by the natives. A few of the sailors were withdrawn from their work of the defence of the bulwarks, and were ordered to haul on the sheets so that the sails might catch what wind there was. If she could escape from the attack of the two ships, she might yet beat off the natives. But it

was too late; the pirates threw off the grapnels that attached them to the ships they had captured, and again some of the canoes took them in tow. Several of these were sunk, but the way given was sufficient, and the leading vessel ranged alongside the merchantman.

The exultant shouts of the Malays rose high in the air as the men from the pirate ship and prahs swarmed on deck. The Dutch soldiers held together and fought steadily, but their numbers lessened fast as the spears of the Malays flew among them. Few of them had time to reload their muskets and fire a second shot. Erasmus fell by Van Houten's side when the latter had but a dozen men left around him. The leader of the pirates, whom he now recognized, shouted: "Do not touch that white officer! Make him prisoner—I want him!"

A moment later there was a general rush of the Malays. Three of them sprang upon Van Houten and dragged him to the ground, and soon a yell of triumph told that the last of the defenders had fallen. Van Houten was now allowed to rise to his feet, his arms still clasped by his assailants. "Why don't you kill me, you scoundrel, the same as the others?" he said to the pirate.

"You will be killed soon enough," the Arab said; 'but I want to keep you for a while just to have the pleasure of showing you that girl in my hands. I was not good enough to look at her, you thought. Good or not, she shall be mine! I settled on that the first moment that I saw her. Bind him tightly and take him below. Be sure that his cords are tight. No!—tie him to the mast; we shall have the pleasure of looking at him and talking to him sometimes."

Then he gave a number of orders. Prize crews were told off to the three captured vessels; the remaining prahs took the five ships in tow, and in a body they moved away. Six hours' rowing brought them to a narrow inlet. Here was a native village. Two of the men were placed as guards over Van Houten, and the work of emptying the ships of their valuables then began and continued until late at night, everything being taken ashore by the boats. Three days passed in feasting and rejoicing. The prisoner's arms were unbound, so that he could eat the food given him at regular intervals. His guards were changed every two hours, and the pirate came round each day to taunt his captive. Even had the guards been removed, the latter could not have freed himself, for the ropes round his legs and chest were all

tied round the other side of the mast, and he could not therefore possibly get at the knots.

On the third evening Van Houten saw that one at least of the two men who came on guard was the worse for liquor. He grumbled loudly at being brought off from the pleasures on shore to look after this white prisoner.

"However," he said, "I have brought off my gourd."

"You had better be careful," the other said. "If the captain came off and found you drunk, he would shoot you like a dog."

"Bah! He went into his hut half an hour ago, and he won't be out again to-night. Besides, I am not going to get drunk; I am just comfortable, that is all."

Nevertheless, the warning had its effect, and the man only took small sips from his gourd. Van Houten let his chin drop on his breast as if asleep, and presently the man, as he passed in front of him, lurched against him. In a moment Van Houten snatched one of the knives from his girdle and hid it beneath his coat. The other guard was standing a few paces away watching the shore, and the action was unnoticed. Feeling for the first time since he had been captured that there was

some hope, the young soldier now went off to sleep, a thing he had not been able to do before owing to the tightness of his bonds. When he woke, the sun was just rising, and his guard had been twice changed. The day passed as before, but that evening the boats pushed off to their various ships.

Early the next morning these were towed out of the inlet. The boats that were not to accompany them returned to the village. Slowly and clumsily the sails were hoisted, and the five vessels, each crowded with Malays, set sail. Van Houten had been carried the evening before to the warship of which the pirate captain had taken the command. He was, as before, tied to the mast, but was fastened in a sitting position on the deck instead of a standing one.

"I do not wish you to die yet," the man said, giving him a kick. "I don't want you to be so sleepy that you will be stupid. I want you to be able to take it all in."

The change was an intense relief. For five days he had been kept standing; at times his legs refused to bear his weight, and he had been supported entirely by the ropes round his body. He dropped almost instantaneously asleep when the pirate left him, and the sun was high next day

before he awoke. For a time his neck was so stiff from the position he had slept in that he almost cried out from the pain as he lifted it. He had been dreaming that he was in the dungeon of the Spanish Inquisition, and that he was being tortured, and for a moment he could scarce understand where he was, for the pain of the tightly bound ropes seemed to be part of his dream.

Four days passed. He was no longer strictly guarded, for escape in mid-ocean was impossible; nevertheless, the knots of his ropes were examined two or three times a day, as had been the case all along. He was liberated from his bonds for five minutes four times a day, four of the Malays keeping close to him to prevent him from jumping overboard. Early one afternoon the western extremity of Sumatra was made out, and after the fleet had passed through the narrow straits between that island and the island of Banca, they headed south, keeping close inshore, towards the Straits of Sunda. As Van Houten, when he had taken his last walk before it became dark, saw the ships' heads were pointed south, he thought that from the course they were taking they would strike the island of Java early next morning some thirty miles to the west of Batavia.

"I have no doubt you are thinking," the pirate said to him coldly, "that the people on shore will see us in the morning and take the alarm. There is no fear of that. Before it is light, the two ships I had before will make their way to sea again. We shall have the Dutch flag flying, and shall sail along two miles or so from the coast. Of course we shall be recognized as we pass Batavia, and the authorities will suppose that their fleet has not come upon the vessels they were in search of, and, having obtained news that they were likely to attempt a landing on the island farther to the east, are now coasting along in hopes of falling in with them.

"A bold plan, is it not? By evening we shall be back again off the Meyers's plantation, and by nightfall I shall have my beauty on board. We shall have been already joined by our consorts, and shall sail together to Batavia. The artillerymen in the fort will think we have made a capture during the night, and we shall get in without a shot being fired at us. At the same time the party that have landed will attack the place on the land side. Then we will sack and burn the town, attack the forts from the land side, where they are weak, kill the artillerymen, and carry off such guns as we

choose. After that, we shall have a wedding, which you shall witness. If we cannot get a minister to perform it, we will manage to do without one. She shall then be taken on board my ship while I superintend your roasting on a bonfire. That is my programme, what do you think of it?"

Van Houten had stared stolidly astern while the pirate was speaking. The latter, apparently not expecting any answer to his question, with a mocking laugh turned away. As soon as it had become quite dark a boat had been lowered, and the pirate had gone on board the other vessels to give his orders. The prisoner listened eagerly for his return. If the boat were pulled up it seemed to him that the last chance of escape was gone, for, cramped as he was by his long confinement, he felt sure he would not be able to swim ashore. He almost held his breath as he heard it returning to the ship's side. There were no such appliances as now exist for raising boats, and to get one of the clumsy and heavy boats on deck was a work of no small labour.

The pirate sprung on deck and gave an order to the men in the boat. As the prisoner did not understand Malay he was ignorant of its purport; but when the four men who had been rowing her

came on deck, and one of them, holding the boat's painter in his hand, walked astern with it, he felt sure that she was to be allowed to tow there, at any rate till morning. After the ships had been put on their course, parallel with the shore, there was soon silence on board. There was no moon, but the stars were bright, and the vessels moved along with a gentle breeze, about three knots an hour. That evening the guard of two men had again been posted over the prisoner, for, certain as the captain felt that escape was impossible, he thought it would be as well to neglect no precaution now that land was near. The Malays themselves seemed to consider that a guard was altogether unnecessary, and, after some talk between them, one lay down between the guns, while the other took up his place by the mast and leant against it, close to Van Houten.

The latter waited for half an hour until he felt that the other guard was asleep, then, taking out his knife, he cut the cords. The slight noise as these fell aroused the sentry on guard, half-asleep as he leant against the mast, and he stooped down so as to assure himself that all was right. Van Houten seized his throat with one hand, and with the other drove his knife up to the hilt into him.

There was no need to repeat the blow. It had been driven through the heart. Noiselessly Van Houten lowered him to the deck, then, moving a little on one side, propped up the body against the mast in the attitude in which he himself had been bound. After taking off his shoes he made his way astern. The Malays were lying thickly between the guns on either side, but all were sound asleep. Reaching the ladder up to the lofty poop he climbed it.

There were no Malays here except the man at the wheel, and he was so intent on his work that he did not notice Van Houten as he crept past. He found the boat's rope, which was tied to the rail, and lowered himself till he was in the water. The boat was some ten yards astern, and, severing the rope, he was soon alongside her. Keeping his hand on the gunwale, he worked along it till he reached the stern; this he grasped and hung on. The boat soon lost her way, and the ship receded fast. He made no effort to climb into the boat until the latter had quite disappeared from his sight, for had he, in climbing on board, moved one of the oars in her, the rattle might have been heard by someone sleeping lightly on the ship. Once assured that she was well away, he cautiously raised himself

and clambered over the stern, using the utmost care in each movement so as to avoid touching anything movable. He waited a quarter of an hour, then he crept forward; took off his coat, cut off one of the sleeves, fastened this round one of the heavy oars and put it out over the stern, so that the cloth was in the groove made for the purpose of enabling one man to scull her when near shore. This would prevent the slightest chance of the pirates hearing him at work.

He found it terribly hard at first, so sore was his body from the pressure of the ropes. Gradually, however, as he warmed to his work, he became able to put out his strength, the stars being a sufficient guide to enable him to make his way straight to shore. He had no fear of being overtaken even if his escape were speedily discovered, for they would not be able to tell how long a time had elapsed since he got away. He thought it probable, however, that the escape would not be discovered until morning. The other Malay would have slept till he was roused by his comrade, and would not be likely to wake until day broke, when he would discover the change that had been effected.

The heavy boat moved but slowly, and it was not until a good hour after leaving the ship that

he made out the shore. Fortunately the breeze during the afternoon had been a good one, and so the pirates had passed the Straits of Sunda at nine o'clock, and had then changed their course to the east. What wind there was, was from the north, and so helped him, and two hours after leaving the ship he reached the shore. He had fifty miles to go to Batavia, but there would be plenty of time. It was certain that the attack at the station could not take place till the following night. He knew a plantation where a colonist with whom he was acquainted lived, and this could not be more than two or three miles away. His strength, weakened by suffering and mental torment, was greatly diminished, and after walking for a mile he felt that it would be better for him to rest till morning broke, when he would be able to ascertain exactly where he was, and find his way to the plantation.

Accordingly he lay down, but would not permit himself to doze, as, worn out as he was from want of rest, if he did so he might sleep far into the day. He soon found that, lying down, it would be impossible for him to keep awake, and accordingly sat down by a large rock in the position to which he had become accustomed. The hours passed

slowly, but he had now no difficulty in keeping awake. He was filled with exultation at his escape and at the prospect of turning the tables upon the pirate. As soon as day broke he struck inland, for he knew that a road ran east and west, by which the various products of the land were taken to the town. In half an hour he came upon it, and after following it for a mile came upon the plantation fence. Arriving at the gate, he entered and made his way up to the house. There was already movement there. A group of native labourers were receiving orders from an overseer, who looked in astonishment at the appearance of an officer, haggard, and blistered by the sun, and whose uniform was still wet, and one sleeve altogether missing.

"This is the station of Meinheer de Koning, is it not?" Van Houten asked.

"It is, sir; but he is not up yet."

"I am the bearer of important news and must see him at once. Will you order one of the servants to arouse him, and tell him that Lieutenant Van Houten desires to see him instantly on a matter of the most pressing importance?"

In five minutes the planter came down. Philip had met him several times in Batavia. The latter

gazed at him in surprise, failing at first to recognize the figure before him as the smart young officer of his acquaintance.

"It is I, just escaped from one of the ships of the 'Sea Tiger', who, with four vessels beside his own, is on his way to attack Batavia, and unless I can arrive there in time to warn them, he will do terrible damage."

"Which way were the ships going?" De Koning asked in consternation.

"They were going east. The five ships are crowded with Malays, and they reckon upon destroying the town and overrunning the whole country. I beg of you that you will at once lend me a good horse."

"You don't look fit to ride five miles much less fifty. I will have two horses put into my vehicle and drive you myself. In the meantime, come in and take a glass of wine and some bread. I will have a basket of provisions put in the trap for you to eat as we go along."

In a quarter of an hour a light vehicle drawn by two horses drew up to the door. Philip, who felt refreshed and strengthened by the wine, at once clambered up. The planter took the reins, and they started.

On their way Philip told the story of the events he had gone through.

"And so the scoundrels captured the ship of war and her two consorts? No wonder they think that, with five ships crowded, as you say, with men, they can take Batavia."

The basket contained a good supply of provisions and fruit, and Philip was able to make a hearty meal after the diet of bread and water on which he had lived for the last ten days. The planter had lent him a doublet, which he had put on in place of his uniform coat, and they therefore attracted no attention when, after six hours' drive, they arrived at Batavia and went straight to the governor's house. The latter, on hearing Philip's story, summoned the members of the council and the military commander. After some discussion the plan of action was decided upon. All the troops in garrison were to march to Meyers's plantation. They were to take with them six light guns. The crier went round the town summoning all the inhabitants to gather in the market-place.

Here the governor told them the news that he had received, and then explained the plan of operations. "The artillery are to remain here to man the guns of the fort in case the pirates should

change their plan, and one company of soldiers is also to stay behind to oppose any landing. In the first place, I beg that all having vehicles will place them at our disposal—they will be used to carry the troops out to Meyers's station. Then if the troops hear firing here, they will know that the pirates have changed their plans, and will be brought back to the town with all speed, so that in a little over an hour after the first gun is fired they will be here ready to help in the defence. In the next place, it is all-important for the safety of the island and the town that a heavy blow shall be dealt these pirates. There are now four merchant ships in the harbour and a number of native boats. I trust that every man capable of bearing arms will volunteer to man them. I myself shall remain here, but all the members of the council have decided to go in the boats. I think it probable that by far the greater portion of the Malays will land and attempt to capture Meyers's plantation, with the intention of afterwards marching upon the town and attacking it on the land side. If they do this their ships will naturally be but feebly manned, and we have decided to adopt the suggestion made by Lieutenant Van Houten, who has been in the hands of the pirates and has escaped from them,

that as soon as the fight begins on shore, and the attention of the pirates on board is fixed on the struggle, they shall be attacked on the other side by the flotilla of boats.

"This attack shall be chiefly directed against the ship of war, which, I am sorry to say, they have captured. She carries heavier guns than the others, and is a fast sailer. Therefore, when she is once taken, her guns can be turned on the others, and I hope these will all be recaptured. The officers and crew of the merchant ships here will aid in the attack. They have as great an interest as we have in their destruction, and will be able to work the guns. If we are successful, we shall at one blow destroy the power of this terrible pirate, the 'Sea-Tiger', and render the sea open again to commerce. Captain Smidt, one of your council, who is, as you know, a distinguished naval officer, has volunteered to take the command of the expedition, and will lead the boats to the attack.

"He will also arrange the crews of each boat. I beg that you will all inscribe your names as ready to fight for your homes, families, and possessions, all of which will be in grievous danger unless these pirates are crushed. At seven o'clock this evening those who have volunteered will assemble at the

fort. The boats will be in readiness with a number painted on each, so that when you are told off you will be able each one to take his place without confusion in his allotted boat, or in one or other of the ships. The pirates will make their landing about eleven o'clock. The boats will row till within three miles of them, then they will be taken in tow by the ships. The sounds of the boats' oars would be heard for a long way on a still night. You will probably get quite close to them before you are seen. The moment the alarm is given, the tow-ropes must be thrown off. The ships will fire a broadside into the man-of-war, and at once range alongside her, and the boats will attack the other pirates."

The speech was received in silence, save that a hearty shout arose when the governor called upon them to volunteer.

"Captain Smidt is already at the town-hall," he said. "Go there and register your names, in order that he may know how many boats will be required, and will be able to make his arrangements accordingly. A cordon of troops has been placed round the town, and no one will be allowed to leave without a permit. Some of the natives might, if they knew the preparations that have been made, make off, and swim to the pirate ships with the news."

As he ceased speaking, the little crowd moved off towards the town-hall. Mounted men were at once despatched to all plantations within fifteen miles, calling upon the planters to drive in instantly with their arms for the defence of the town, which was menaced by an attack from pirates.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the three vessels that had left there ten days before were seen sailing past the town. They should have been sighted some hours earlier, but shortly after daybreak the wind had fallen, and the calm had lasted till mid-day. All were flying the Dutch flag, which they hauled down in salute to those flying on the fort, but proceeded on their way without changing their course. Everything was apparently quiet in the fort, and the salutes were duly returned. Boats sufficient to carry the number of men available had by this time been drawn up close to the shore, each bearing its number painted on her bow.

At half-past six the townspeople began to gather. All were armed with muskets or rifles, pikes or swords, and quietly and without confusion they took their allotted places, some on the boats, some on the two ships.

The troops had marched an hour before, joined by between forty and fifty men who came in from

the plantations. Van Houten had gone with them. They halted half a mile from the station. It was desirable that they should not come up until the native labourers were all asleep. Van Houten himself rode on, and it was nearly nine o'clock as he entered. He was greeted by a cry of joy and surprise from the planter's daughter.

"Why, Philip!" she exclaimed. "How have you got here? We saw your three vessels come along just as it became dark, an hour ago. I suppose you must have landed as they passed Batavia. But what is the matter? you look strangely ill. Have you been wounded in a fight with those pirates?"

"You do look strange," her father added, "and you are not in uniform."

"Things have gone badly," he replied. "Our three vessels have all been captured, and I am the sole survivor of the crews. I have been a prisoner, and only escaped last night."

"Then what are the three ships we saw?" the planter said. "I could have sworn to the man-of-war *Leyden*. I was not sure as to the other two ships."

"They were full of pirates, meinheer, and have probably been joined by two more ships by this time. They are going to land at about eleven

o'clock to burn this place down and carry your daughter off, and after that they will storm and sack Batavia."

"Are you in earnest, Van Houten, or dreaming? If your news is true, there is not a moment to be lost. We must have the horses and trap round at once and drive inland or to Batavia. The town can successfully resist."

"I should certainly advise Elise to retire at once to a station a mile or two away. There will be a battle fought here. Two hundred soldiers and forty or fifty planters, with six guns, halted a mile away. They will be here in an hour's time, and will give the Malays a reception that they do not dream of. As soon as the fight begins, their ships will be attacked by two merchantmen and a flotilla of boats manned by every available man in Batavia, with the exception of the governor himself and a small garrison, who will remain in the fort to protect the town should the pirates change their plans. Captain Smidt is in command of the flotilla, Colonel Stern is with the troops."

"This is startling news indeed," the planter said after a moment's silence. "You say they will not attack till eleven. I will have the horses put in at once. I will take Elise to my neighbour Rogen,

whose house is three miles inland. I shall be back again in plenty of time to take my part in the affair. Or, no—you shall drive her there, Van Houten. I dare say that you would like to do so."

"Thank you, sir!"

"But can I not stay here?"

"No, dear," her father said decisively; "you might be hit by a chance shot, and I don't want to be in a state of anxiety about you while I have other things to do."

He rang the bell standing on the table. A servant entered. "In the first place, go and tell Domingo to put the horses into the carriage at once and to bring it round to the door, then bring in glasses and a bottle of Rhine wine."

Ten minutes later Van Houten started with Elise, the native driving. On the way he gave her a sketch of all that had happened since he went away, and told her of the plans of the "Sea Tiger". The girl shuddered.

"From what a fate have you saved me!" she murmured; "but it would not have been so, for I would have killed myself."

"I do not think that he would have given you much opportunity for doing that. He said that he would take good care that no weapon should be

put in your way. However, thank God that his schemes have been thwarted by his own folly in torturing me by telling me of his intentions! You need have no fear of the results of this fight; taken wholly by surprise as they will be, and bewildered by the attack on their ships, we are certain to defeat them on land, and I trust that we shall capture all their ships; and the lesson will be so terrible that it will be a long time before any other is likely to follow the 'Sea Tiger's' example."

On arriving at the planter's house he found that he and his son had ridden into Batavia at four o'clock in obedience to the governor's call. His wife and daughter were glad to have Elise with them, and, leaving her to tell the story, Philip drove back to her father's.

The column arrived three minutes after his return, and the colonel went round the ground with Van Houten and the planter. The house stood some three hundred yards from the shore, the ground slanting gradually down from it; there were plantations on either side. Four of the guns were placed under the broad verandah, with the five-and-twenty men who were to work them. The rest were distributed among the shrubberies on either side of the open space running down from

the house towards the water, where they would take the pirates, as they advanced, in flank. Van Houten offered to take ten of the planters down to destroy the boats when the Malays had left them.

Ten of the colonists volunteered for the service, and were provided from the storehouse with axes for staving in the boards. They posted themselves in a clump of bushes close to the shore. A quarter of an hour passed, and then they heard five loud splashes and a confused noise, and knew that the pirate's ships had anchored. Then came a creaking of pulleys and grating sounds, and they knew that the boats had been lowered. The lights in the house had all been extinguished, and perfect silence reigned. Presently there was a sound of many oars and the beat of paddles, and five minutes later ten large boats crowded with men appeared, making for the shore, and in a few minutes the grating of the keels was heard on the sand, and dark figures could be seen making their way up the beach.

"There must be three hundred of them at least," Van Houten said to the man who was standing next to him, "and I fancy that about the same number remain on board. As far as I can make

out, there are only one or two men left on guard at each boat. We will creep up as quietly as we can, directly the firing breaks out; each of you will pick off his man—the noise will not be noticed in the row that will be going on up above. Then let two go to each boat and stave in a couple of planks, and then go along and do the same with the others, but see that it is done thoroughly. Directly all the boats are damaged hurry back here and open fire upon the pirates as they return. Traces have been fastened to the guns, and the artillerymen will run them down towards the water's edge, and the soldiers will advance and surround the scoundrels as they strive to push the boats off; not one of them should be able to regain their ships."

The pirates were led by a man whose white dress showed up clearly in the darkness, and who Van Houten was sure was the "Sea Tiger" himself. They advanced towards the house in an irregular line, the two flanks rather in advance. No sound was heard among them. It was evident that they had been ordered to preserve silence until the house was surrounded. They went on and on until they could be no longer seen by the watchers. Suddenly a voice shouted "Fire!"

Six guns loaded to the muzzle with bullets spoke

out, and the musketry, in a semicircle, flashed from the shrubbery. "Now is our time!" Van Houten cried. The ten men went forward at a run. Within twenty yards of the nearest boat they halted and poured in their fire, and more than half the men standing together on the beach fell. Then they dashed forward. Two minutes sufficed to do the work, and they ran back to the bush from which they started. The din above was terrible. The Malays, for a moment staggered by the terrible and unexpected fire, had run back a few paces; but the voice of their leader encouraged them, and with loud yells they again rushed forward.

The cannon were silent, for loading was a long operation in those days; but by the colonel's orders only half the soldiers had taken part in the first volley, and the others now poured in their fire.

The Malays pushed on recklessly, and were within twenty yards of the house when they paused, as two broadsides were fired in quick succession out at sea. The Dutch vessels had passed behind the pirates, and, having delivered their first broadside, had tacked and laid themselves alongside the ship of war, pouring in their other broadside as they did so. At the same moment a musketry-fire opened from the whole of the pirate ships,

answered more loudly from the boats, for comparatively few of the Malays carried firearms.

This unexpected attack did what the fear of death could not effect. With a yell of alarm and rage they turned and ran down towards their boats. Then the soldiers poured out from their concealment. Those by the guns seized the traces and ran them down to a distance of fifty yards from the shore, and poured their contents into the crowded mass. The Malays leapt into their boats and pushed them off, but before they were fairly afloat they were full of water to the gunwale. Most of them jumped over and started to swim towards the ships; others leapt ashore, and, drawing their krises, rushed at the troops and fell there, fighting fiercely to the end. Then the guns were run down to the shore and poured showers of grape among the swimmers. In the meantime firing had ceased on board the ship of war and two of the pirates, and the cheers of their captors rose loudly. On the others fighting was still going on, and the yells of the Malays and the cheers of the Dutch could be plainly heard.

In one the fighting presently ceased, but in the other the Malays were apparently successful. The sounds grew fainter, and the direction showed that

the Malays had beaten off their opponents, cut their cable, and were under sail. Three minutes later there was a flash of guns, and their light showed the warship also under sail, evidently in pursuit. Answering guns came back, and these grew farther away. Of the Malays who had landed, some twenty unwounded had alone been taken prisoners. These were placed under a strong guard. The colonel hailed the ships to send a boat ashore. It presently arrived, and they heard, as they supposed, that four of the ships had been recaptured and that the *Leyden* was in pursuit of the other.

They also heard that only some twenty of the men of the naval expedition had been killed, for so completely were the Malays taken by surprise that their assailants had gained a footing on their decks comparatively without opposition. Sails had been at once hoisted when the boat had rowed ashore, and the vessels made for Batavia, where, at noon next day, the *Leyden* arrived with her prize. Not a man had fallen of the Dutch force on shore, though a few had been wounded by the Malays, who, finding their retreat cut off, had rushed at them.

Directly the fight was over, Philip drove over in the trap that had been kept waiting on the other

side of the house, and told Elise and the Rogens that all was over, that the former's father and he were both unhurt, and that the dreaded pirate had fallen, shot through the head, within twenty yards of the house.

"Your father requests that you will stay here till morning, Elise," he said, "then he will drive over and take you into Batavia, where he will join you, and you will stay there until all signs of the fight have been removed."

Batavia went wild with joy at the news of the capture of the whole of the pirate fleet, and the destruction of the "Sea Tiger" and his followers. No quarter had been given on board the vessels first captured, and thirty Malays alone survived the fight of the vessel brought in by the *Leyden*. All the prisoners were tried and shot three days later. Van Houten was the hero of the occasion, and received immediate promotion. All felt that, had he not warned them, the town would almost certainly have been captured and every soul in it massacred.

A month later the whole of Batavia and the neighbourhood thronged to the church to witness the marriage of Captain Van Houten and Elise Meyers.

# ON THE TRACK

## CHAPTER I

### A SAD CHRISTMAS

NEVER had there been such a sensation since the day when Brownsville, Ohio, was first founded, as that which was experienced on the 23rd of December, 1879, at the news that Mr. Partridge, the cashier at the bank, had absconded, and that a great number of valuable securities, and a large sum of money, were missing. The first report indeed stated that the bank would have to suspend payment; but the panic caused by this was speedily allayed by the issue of a notice, signed by James Johnstone, President, to the effect that the loss, although heavy, would in no degree affect the stability of the bank, that the assets were equal to all demands, and that the books had already been placed in the hands of skilled

accountants, who would before nightfall certify to the stability of the bank.

This did not, however, prevent a run taking place; but as all demands were promptly met, and as at six o'clock in the afternoon a satisfactory assurance as to the state of the bank, signed by the two accountants, was affixed to the doors, confidence was restored, and the people were able to concentrate their attention upon the subject of the missing cashier. A few said that they had always suspected that something was wrong, but these were the people who are always wise after an event; the majority admitted frankly that there was nothing in William Partridge's antecedents or behaviour which would warrant a shadow of suspicion as to his probity. He was not altogether a popular man, and was what the people of Brownsville called high in his notions; that is to say, he did not care about mixing much in general society, being intimate only with a small circle of friends.

There was nothing indeed in Mr. Partridge's way of living which would not have been warranted by the salary he was known to draw. He lived in a pretty house just outside the town, and certainly spent more money than his neighbours in keeping his garden bright with flowers. but he never enter-

tained on a large scale. His dinners were choice but small, he kept no equipage, and had no expensive tastes. His reputation indeed was that of a somewhat retiring man with a higher degree of culture and education than most of his neighbours, with quiet and refined manners and studious tastes. All these things, however, would not have prevented him from being seized with the demon "speculation". For many another man, apparently as quiet and as refined, had ruined himself that way; and the verdict of Brownsville was unanimous that he must have become involved in some extensive speculations which had failed signally, and to bolster himself up must have taken the bank funds and securities, hoping to be able to replace them at the next turn of luck.

Everyone agreed that the greatest credit was due to the president, whose vigilance and astuteness had detected the defalcations before they had reached a point which would have proved ruinous to the bank, its shareholders, and depositors. Mr. James Johnstone had always been a popular personage in Brownsville, but he was never so popular as upon this occasion. A deputation of shareholders and depositors waited upon him to express their thanks for his vigilance and watchfulness;

and although Mr. Johnstone did not say much he led them to understand that they had every reason to be grateful, for that things would very shortly have been in a very bad way had it not been for his interposition.

The president was a tall man, and just sufficiently inclined to stoutness to add to his appearance of respectability and solvency. He was smoothly shaven, and wore gold eye-glasses, and looked a director every inch. While his cashier never attended public gatherings on scientific, political, or sordid subjects, the president was always a prominent figure at them. He never, however, took a leading part on either side, but appeared rather in the character of an arbitrator. His speeches were always pleasing to both parties, throwing oil on the troubled waters. He was a large subscriber to all the local charities, and although he himself belonged to the Baptist persuasion he made no distinction between the various creeds in the distribution of his alms. Such being the case, when Brownsville once realized the fact that its own savings were in no jeopardy, its sympathy with the banker for the annoyance and trouble that this occurrence would cause him became very great. The matter was discussed in all lights

at every tea-table in Brownsville, and even formed the principal topic of conversation among a number of young people who were preparing a school-room for the festivities which were to take place on the following evening.

"What is to be done about Roland Partridge?" Lilla Fairfax, a girl of some sixteen years of age, asked during a pause in the buzz of conversation.

"Of course he won't have the bad taste to show his face here," Percy Johnstone, the president's son, replied.

"I don't see that," Cissie White, a girl who had, however, taken no part in the conversation, but had been sitting in a corner, undisturbed, manufacturing wreaths, said warmly. "He is not to blame for the faults of his father."

"Bravo, Cissie!" Percy Johnstone said in a sneering voice. "It is as well that he should know what a valiant champion he has; but, you see, we have scriptural authority for saying that children must suffer for the faults of their fathers."

"It was not meant in that way," the girl retorted, "and I think it very mean of you to talk so. I suppose you think because Roland Partridge is to suffer for the fault of his father that you are a

great man because of the numerous virtues of yours."

There was a general laugh, for Percy Johnstone was known to give himself airs to no inconsiderable extent on account of the social position of the banker. He coloured hotly at the reply and the laughter that followed it, but found no answer ready at hand.

"But really," Lilla Fairfax said, "we ought to decide what we are to do about Roland Partridge. I don't see that there is any necessity for quarrelling over it, but we have got to discuss it. It would not be quite pleasant, you know, for him to be coming amongst us just as if nothing had happened. You would not like it yourself, Cissie."

"I should not like what?" Cissie White asked shortly.

"Well, you would not like to go out sleighing with him, for example."

"I should certainly go out sleighing with him if he asked me," Cissie answered quietly. "Indeed he did ask me two days ago, and I said yes, and if he comes to fetch me I shall certainly go now."

"He is not likely to," Jane Simmonds, the eldest girl present, said.

"No, he is not likely to," Cissie agreed; "he has

other things to think about. I only say that if he does come I shall keep my engagement."

"Quite right, Cissie!" Tom Fernlea said heartily. "I like a friend who is a friend, not a mere fair-weather bird. There is no better fellow going than Roland. He may not be quite so brilliant as some fellows," and he glanced at Percy, "and he does not go out of his own way to make himself popular; but I prefer good, straightforward, earnest fellows, and I would almost back him against all Brownsville."

"There are a good many people," Percy Johnstone said coldly, "who would perhaps have said as much two days ago for his father. Perhaps you may change your opinion one of these days."

"I am not likely to change my opinion of you, at any rate," Tom replied hotly, "and that is a pretty strong one, I can tell you. Everyone knows that you never liked Roland, because he always beat you in class, and he is a better baseball player, and a better skater, and a better fellow all round than you are!"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" Lilla Fairfax exclaimed plaintively, "whatever are you all quarrelling about? We have come here to make decorations for to-morrow, and the demon of discord seems

to have entered in. I vote, girls, that the next person who quarrels, whoever he or she may be, shall be unanimously expelled from this society."

There was a chorus of assent. Jane Simmonds dexterously changed the conversation by asking whether the arrangements had quite been settled for the programme of the following evening. It was easy, however, to see, during the rest of the meeting, that less interest than usual was taken in the various discussions, and that the thoughts of most of the young people were otherwise occupied. Little whispered conferences went on before they broke up; the opinions of most of those present were ascertained, and were found to be pretty equally divided, as to the advisability or otherwise of treating Roland Partridge just as if his father had still been occupying the position of cashier at the bank.

While the conversation had been going on, the subject of it was pacing up and down the sitting-room at home discussing the matter with his mother. Roland had, a few days before, gone over to stay for a week with an uncle who lived some twenty miles away, and had that morning received a telegram from his mother begging him to return at once, and it was not until he reached

home in the evening that he heard the terrible news.

"But it is impossible, mother, absolutely impossible, that my father can have done this thing!"

"That is what I say, Roland. Your father is the last man in the world to do such a thing."

"He never speculated, as far as you know, mother?"

"No, Roland, I am quite sure that he didn't. He was quite contented with his position. He wanted nothing more; and I have often heard him say that no one connected with a bank had any right whatever to engage in business outside it."

"But what did he say, mother? Surely he must have said something when he left you last night?"

"He came in about half-past nine, Roland. He has been staying late at the bank this week making up the books. He was as pale as death. His lips were trembling, and he could hardly speak. When I begged him to tell me what was the matter with him, he said, as nearly as I can remember his words: 'A terrible thing has happened, and I must go away at once. The bank has been robbed!'"

"'But what has that to do with you, William?' I asked. 'I am accused of doing it,' he said. I almost laughed, it seemed so absurd. But he went

on: 'Appearances are terribly against me. It is all a mystery to me. But if I stay I shall be arrested to-morrow morning, and surely condemned, and I could not stand it. It would kill me. I must go. There is no other way. I will write to you and tell you what to do when I can think it over. But I can't think now.' He was in such a nervous state that it was useless to speak to him; and, indeed, I was so stunned with the news myself that I could think of nothing. I did say: 'It would be far better for you to stay, William, and face it out. Your innocence is sure to be proved.' But he only shook his head, and repeated, 'I must go.'

"So I hurried to get a few things together for him, and the moment that I had done so he was off to catch the train. I don't think he was five minutes in the house altogether, and it was not till he had gone that I was able to think clearly what had happened."

"I am not blaming you, mother dear," Roland said tenderly. "But it is most unfortunate that father should have acted as he did. You and I know perfectly well that he is innocent, but his running away will, of course, convince everyone else that he is guilty. It would have been a

thousand times better to have braved it out, however strong the circumstances might be that point against him."

"So I think, of course, Roland. But you know what your father is, and naturally I understand him even better than you do. You have only known him since he was prosperous and respected here; but in the early days of our marriage, when he was still a struggling young man, I learnt, I will not say the faults, my son, but the weaknesses of his character. He is, as you know, a man of strict, nay, of extreme, honour and integrity. But he is sensitive almost to a fault. He has no self-assertion and very little self-confidence. He is just the man, in fact, to bend before a storm rather than brave it; and although I may greatly lament it, I am not a bit surprised that, when suddenly confronted with such a terrible accusation as this, and seeing, as he says, that circumstances are altogether against him, he should abandon the field without a struggle rather than face the storm of public obloquy and indignation."

Roland was silent. He knew how his father shrunk from anything like a public turmoil, and how easily upset he was by trifles which another would scarcely have noticed; and although he had

never acknowledged as much to himself, he had even when much younger been vaguely conscious that his father was lacking in force of character. There was a disinclination to find fault, a shrinking from unpleasantness, and an avoidance even of argument; a desire that everything should go on with clock-like regularity, and that nothing should disturb the even tenor of life, which seemed to show a constitutional avoidance of effort or struggle. Still, as Roland had, as his mother said, only seen his father under circumstances of ease and comfort, he could not tell how far this was an innate defect in his character until it now showed itself so disastrously.

"You don't know where he has gone to, mother?" he said at length; "because, if you have the slightest idea as to the locality, I will start at once to try and find him, and to persuade him to return, whatever the circumstances may be against him. It would be a thousand times better to brave it out than, by running away, to make what cannot but appear a tacit confession of guilt. And now, mother dear, what do you intend to do?"

"That is what I was wanting to talk to you about, Roland. It seems to me that the best thing to do will be to give up our house at once, and to

sell the furniture; and then, in the meantime, if I do not hear from your father, to move right away to some place where we shall not be known, and where I can earn a little money by my needle, and you perhaps can obtain a situation of some sort."

"No, mother," Roland said decidedly. "I quite agree with you as to giving up the house and selling the furniture, but go away we will not. Father may have given up the battle in despair, but I shall stay and fight it out. We know that he did not take this money—it is for me to find out who did so. If we go away the matter can never be cleared up; so long as we remain here there is a chance of our striking on some clue or other."

"It will be dreadful," Mrs. Partridge began.

"It will be horribly painful," Roland agreed. "Awful to have to meet all your old friends and know that they regard one as the son of a swindler. But it has to be done, mother, for only so can we hope to prove that father is an honest man. But I don't ask you to stay, mother. I am quite sure that uncle will be glad for you to go and live with him at the farm. He was saying only yesterday that it had been a dull life for him since aunt had gone."

"No, my boy, I could not do that," Mrs. Partridge

said. "I could not leave you here to bear the burden alone."

"Don't think me unkind, mother, when I say I would rather that you would. I think I could bear the changed faces of old friends so long as the slights affect only myself, but I should suffer ten times more in seeing you suffer. Therefore, mother, I do think that my plan is the best. I hope that it will not be for very long; but till matters are made clear it will be best for you to stay with uncle, and I could run over from time to time to see you and tell you how I am getting on."

"At any rate, Roland, there is no occasion to decide for a few days. The first thing to do is to get rid of the house and sell the furniture. When that is done, we can talk matters over again."

The next morning Roland called upon their landlord and asked him if he would take the house off their hands at once. This the landlord willingly agreed to do, and was indeed well pleased with the proposition. He had already been wondering how Mrs. Partridge intended to manage. The lease had still two years to run, but he did not see how she would be able to pay her rent. He had that morning received an application from a gentleman who was willing to take the house if he could obtain posses-

sion at once, and Roland's proposal to move out at the end of a week exactly suited him. After settling this matter Roland went to an auctioneer, and arranged that notice should at once be issued of the immediate sale of the furniture. He returned home well pleased with the success of his mission.

"As far as I am concerned, mother, I think things will be better than I expected. I see there is a difference of opinion in Brownsville. I have met several people we know well this morning. Some of them just gave me a nod, as much as to say, we see you, but don't want to speak to you. Others nodded, as if they would have liked to have stopped and chatted with me, but were rather afraid to do so; while Tom Fernlea and two other fellows came up and shook hands just as heartily as usual, and asked when I came back from uncle's, what I had been doing, and so on, as if nothing had happened. At any rate, mother, a thing like this gives one an opportunity of finding out which of your friends are worth having and which are not."

There was a certain indication of bitterness in his tone, and his mother looked at him a little anxiously. "You will not get cynical, I hope, Roland, my dear boy. You must remember that a vast number of people act quite as much in accor-

dance with what they think other people will do, as with their own convictions. We are all apt to be guided by the opinions of the world; and though it seems hard that the sins of parents should in any degree be visited upon their children, we must remember that children get the benefit the other way. If a boy or a girl's father is a rich and popular man, they will be made more of than when not so situated. Of course this is wrong, and everyone should be judged by themselves, and no doubt that eventually is the case. Of course if one whom we believed to be a true friend fell away at a time of trial, it would be a proof that his friendship was not a true one; but we must not be surprised if any mere acquaintances go with the stream, whatever its direction may be."

"You are becoming quite a philosopher, little mother," Roland laughed. "At any rate, as I said, things are better than I expected. Of course it is no good doing anything for the next day or two;" and a shade passed over Roland's face as he thought how widely his Christmas day would differ from his anticipations of it; "but next week I will go round and see if I can get something to do. I am not particular what it is, as long as it enables me to stay at Brownsville."

## CHAPTER II

### TRUE FRIENDS

LATE in the afternoon Roland went out to get a few things that were required. Suddenly he came on a group of half a dozen girls who had just finished putting up the decorations in the school-room. The first couple passed him with a bow, but Cissie White, who was walking next, stopped with her companion and shook hands with him.

"How are you, Roland? We have missed you at decorations this afternoon."

"I was sorry not to be able to come, Cissie," Roland said, "and I am sorry I shall not be able to keep my engagement to go sleighing on the 26th."

"I am very sorry too; I should have been so glad to have gone with you, if you could have taken me, but I was afraid you would not be able to. I want to tell you, Roland,"—and she hesitated. "I don't know whether people talk about such things, but I am sure you won't mind. I want to tell you how sorry we all are about the news we have heard, and to say I hope it is not going to make any difference to you."

"I am afraid it must make a difference, Cissie," Roland answered; "but thank you very much for what you have said, and I want to tell you that whatever people may think, I and my mother know that my father did not do this thing that they accuse him of, and some day I hope to prove his innocence."

"I am so glad to hear you say so, Roland; it did seem impossible, and yet,"—and she hesitated.

"And yet everyone said so," he put in. "Unfortunately my father is a very nervous and sensitive man, and the thought of such a charge made him well-nigh beside himself, and he went away; but he is not guilty for all that, and some day I will prove it. Will you please tell the people—the people I know, I mean—not that my father is innocent, for they might not believe it, but that his wife and son are absolutely sure that he is so?"

"I will indeed, Roland, and I am very, very glad to hear what you say. You may be sure that whatever other people say in future, I shall believe it as you tell me. Good-bye now!" And again shaking hands warmly, she hurried away after her companions, who were waiting for her at the corner of the next block.

"What have you found to talk about, Cissie? I

would have stopped and spoken too, only I could not think what I should say."

"I told him that I was sorry to hear the news," Cissie said, "and that I hoped it would not make any difference to him."

"Oh, Cissie, you don't mean to say you alluded to that! How could you!"—a chorus from the others.

"Why not?" Cissie asked. "He knew that we must be thinking about it, and why shouldn't I say it? and I am glad I did, for if I had not spoken perhaps he would not have alluded to the matter, and he told me that whatever other people might say, he and his mother were quite sure that Mr. Partridge did not take the money."

There was an incredulous "Oh!" from her hearers, and Jane Simmonds asked, "What did he run away for, then, if he wasn't guilty?"

"Because he is sensitive, and could not stay to face such an accusation. Of course Roland did not say that he was foolish, but I could see that he thought that it was an awful pity."

"I should think it was," Jane Simmonds replied sarcastically. "Of course his wife and son say they think he is innocent, that is only natural; but they won't get anyone to believe them."

"You are wrong for once, Jane," Cissie said quietly, "although I know that it must appear to you to be quite impossible; but, as it happens, I believe them entirely, and although I am a very insignificant person, still I am somebody, and that, you see, upsets your sweeping assertion."

"Well, my dear," Jane Simmonds replied, "if you wish to retain your reputation as a sensible girl I should advise you to keep your opinion to yourself, unless indeed you wish to set up as knowing more than anyone else in the town."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," Cissie replied. "Cassandra was looked upon as an idiot, you know, but she turned out to be right. Brownsville is welcome to entertain the same opinion about me, and I am content that they should think so till I turn out to be right, as you will see will be the case in the end; and now I must be off to tea."

The sale came off on the day arranged. No word had been received from Mr. Partridge, but his wife had hardly expected that he would write so soon; and as she knew he had some hundred dollars in his possession when he went away, she was under no uneasiness respecting him. On the morning of the sale she went to her brother's, Roland's plan having finally been decided upon as the best.

The day before the sale Mrs. Partridge received a note from Mr. Johnstone saying that he should be glad to obtain a position for her son in a mercantile house in New York; to which Mrs. Partridge replied that she was greatly obliged and thankful for the offer, but that Roland had quite made up his mind that for the present he should remain in Brownsville, where he hoped to obtain some sort of occupation.

The refusal was speedily known in Brownsville, Percy Johnstone spreading the news everywhere; it excited surprise among some, displeasure among many.

"I think it was wonderfully good of my father," Percy told his friends, "after the trouble and loss the fellow's father has caused, to offer to put him into a situation. I should have thought that he would have been only too glad to have got away from here, and I am sure his absence would have been a relief to us all. I can't understand his motives."

Many others, even among those most favourably disposed towards Roland, were inclined to agree with Percy. His continued presence in Brownsville would be a source of embarrassment and trouble to those who had previously been intimate with him, and it did seem strange that he should

prefer to live among people cognisant of his father's misdoings, instead of taking the opportunity that offered of beginning life elsewhere.

Mr. Johnstone's conduct in interesting himself on his behalf was considered kind in the extreme. Still more surprise was excited when, at the meeting of the directors of the bank called a day or two after the beginning of the new year, after explaining the amount of the loss to the bank, he said, in reply to questions, that he had not as yet offered any reward for the apprehension of the fugitive, and had not indeed instructed the police to take any steps in the matter. Rumours to that effect had already been current, for the police authorities, when interviewed on the subject, had declared that they had no instructions on the matter; but it was generally supposed that this was mere official reticence intended to lull the fugitive into security, while they were quietly working to arrest him. The announcement of Mr. Johnstone caused quite a sensation among his colleagues.

"I must say, Mr. Johnstone," one said angrily, "that your course in this matter appears to me to be most extraordinary. As you did not call us together at once, we naturally supposed that you were taking all the necessary steps, and that Par-

tridge would, in a few days at latest, be in the hands of the police; and now you meet us and tell us that you have done nothing. You said, in fact, when we wanted to go into the question on the morning after the discovery of the cashier's flight, and one of us suggested that a hot pursuit should be at once set on foot, that we could safely leave that matter in your hands, and that we had best confine our attention to the investigation of the accounts."

Several others spoke to the same effect, and Mr. Johnstone then rose with his usual placid and undisturbed aspect. "Gentlemen," he said, "in the first place I have not called you together earlier because just at this time of year every man is occupied more or less by family matters; and as it did not seem to me that there was any extreme urgency in the matter, I thought I would allow you to enjoy the holiday undisturbed. Now, as to the main subject of your remarks, namely, that I have taken no steps to secure the arrest of our late cashier. Well, gentlemen, I am aware that in not doing so I have assumed a certain amount of responsibility. Certainly, when I met you ten days since, I had intended to set the police at work without delay. For the first twenty-four hours,

however, I was so occupied with the investigations into the state of the books, and, I may say, with reassuring the minds of our depositors and restoring confidence, that I had really no time to move in the matter.

"Then, gentlemen, came Christmas, with Christmas thoughts, Christmas sermons, and Christmas associations, and I said to myself, this man is undoubtedly a thief and a defaulter. But how stands it? The man should be punished; but, gentlemen, for the last fifteen years he has been our friend. We have all been proud of him as a gentleman of singular culture. Most of us have been intimate at his house and acquainted with his wife, one of the most charming ladies in our section. In all these years his conduct has been above reproach, and although he has had passing through his hands the funds of the bank, he has up till now accounted for them up to the last penny. There can be no doubt that the mania of speculation, which is the bane of our civilization, seized upon this unhappy man, and that in a moment, I may say of temporary insanity, he laid his hands upon the bank funds to meet some loss, intending, no doubt, to replace them at the earliest opportunity.

"Well, gentlemen, that opportunity never came.

We know the usual sad story in these cases. Loss follows loss, and a man becomes desperate, until at last comes the inevitable discovery. Gentlemen, we all know that the man who does these things should be punished, but it seemed to me that no punishment that the law could allot would add very greatly to that which he must be now suffering. Imagine, gentlemen, a man with refined tastes and habits skulking, a fugitive from justice, perhaps by this time half-way across the ocean, knowing that he can never raise his head again in the society of honest men. There was nothing to gain, for you may be sure that the money has long since passed out of his hands, and I feel that it would do us no good were he arrested and tried. Everyone knows now that the bank has made a loss; they are also satisfied that the bank is solvent; confidence is restored, and we have avoided anything like a run. No one, indeed, has any idea how large the losses really are outside this board.

"Now, gentlemen, if we were to have a trial, the real amount of the loss would become known; and although we ourselves may feel confident that we can weather the storm, and can in time pull round, it is by no means certain that the public will take the same view. The run which has now been

averted might then take place, and the bank be compelled to shut its doors. And you know, gentlemen, that when you come to a forced realization of effects, how far the sum realized falls short of the value placed upon it, and how heavy the calls upon the shareholders to make up the deficiency! Well, gentlemen, we are all large shareholders in the bank, and now that ten days have elapsed, and we have kept matters quiet, I ask you, is it worth while to run the risk of bringing ruin upon the bank, and beggary upon its shareholders, merely for the pleasure of knowing that our defaulting cashier has got so many years of penal servitude?"

Put in this light the matter assumed a very different appearance. The directors knew well enough that although they had put a good face on the matter, the loss did seriously compromise the stability of the bank, and that the less the matter was dragged before the public the better. The directors looked at each other in silence when Mr. Johnstone concluded. But one said: "The public will think it a most extraordinary thing that we do not prosecute."

"But we intend to prosecute," Mr. Johnstone said. "It is distinctly understood that is our intention. But facts have come to our knowledge

which leave no doubt that our cashier escaped into Canada within a few hours of his leaving this place, and it is believed by this time he has crossed the Atlantic. Should he ever return to this country he will, of course, be prosecuted at once on grounds of public policy and as a duty to the shareholders; but at the same time we have no objection to its being whispered abroad that although the directors would strictly carry out their duty had the opportunity been afforded, they are at heart by no means sorry, both for the sake of the man himself and for that of his wife, that he has succeeded in escaping before the hand of justice could be laid upon him."

After some further discussion, the view taken by the president was unanimously approved of, and the report that the cashier was known to have escaped into Canada, and had made his way to Europe, and that the bank authorities were convinced that he had managed to take but little with him, and were not sorry that the painful duty of prosecuting him had been avoided, was speedily spread through the town.

The unpleasantness which his former friends had anticipated from the strange resolution of Roland Partridge to remain in Brownsville was not expe-

rienced, for he never showed himself in his old resorts, and was seldom to be met with in the streets. It was known that he had applied for several situations, but without success, and that he was at present living in a poor lodging in the outskirts of the place.

"Have you seen Roland Partridge lately?" Cissie White asked Tom Fernlea.

"No, I haven't. I have not seen him since Christmas eve."

"Have you been to see him, Tom? you know where he lives."

"Yes, I know. No, I have not been there yet. I have been meaning to go every day, but what with the sleighing parties, and one thing and another, I have never found time."

"Then you ought to have found it," Cissie said indignantly. "I did not think that you were that sort of boy, Tom. I thought that you would have stuck to your friend. I am downright ashamed of you."

"Well, I am ashamed of myself, now that you have put it so, though I really do mean to stick to him, you know. I have an engagement this evening, but I will get out of it and go."

"You ought to have gone a week since," Cissie

said, very little mollified. "Call yourself a friend, and let your amusements stand in the way for ten days of your going to see a chum who is all alone and in trouble! I would not give a fig for such friendship as that!"

"Well, you are a staunch friend anyhow, Cissie!" Tom said admiringly. "It is not every girl who would care to stick up for a boy as you do for Roland."

"Why shouldn't I stick up for him?" she asked scornfully. "His mother and mine were friends, and many a pleasant afternoon have I spent there. Why shouldn't a girl stick up for her friend as well as a boy, I should like to know? I liked Roland Partridge better than any of the boys in our set, and I don't care who knows it. And I say it is scandalous his being cut because his father turned out badly, even if he did turn out badly, which I don't believe."

"Oh, come now, Cissie, that is too much. Somebody said that you did not believe Mr. Partridge was guilty, but I put that down to pure obstinacy. Well, you need not look angry about it, because I like people who are obstinate for their friends; but I did not imagine that you really could think so."

"Why shouldn't I? I have a right to my thoughts, Tom Fernlea, I suppose, as well as you have. Do you think that Roland Partridge would tell a lie?"

"No, I am sure that he wouldn't," Tom said. "All the years that I have known him I have never heard him tell anything like an untruth."

"Well then, why shouldn't you believe him now he says that he and his mother are absolutely convinced that his father is innocent? I suppose they are quite as likely to know the truth of the matter as anyone in Brownsville."

"Well, Cissie, if Roland says that, he must have grounds for such a statement. Anyhow, I will go to see him this evening. I need not tell him, I suppose, that you sent me?"

"If you do I will never speak to you again, Tom Fernlea, so now you know."

When Tom called at Roland's lodgings that evening he was told that he was out, whereupon he took post at the door and waited for an hour, when his friend returned.

"I have come for a chat," he said, "old fellow, if you will let me in. I have been waiting for an hour to see you. I should have called before, but you know how engaged fellows are, just at this

time of the year. However, I was determined I would come this evening, so I threw over the party at the Dawsons', and here I am."

"I am glad to see you, Tom. Come in," Roland said quietly. He led the way up to his room, and lighted a candle.

"You are looking pale and out of sorts, old fellow," he said as he saw Roland's face. "I know you have had an awful lot to upset you, but still it is of no use letting it make you ill. It is easy, I know, for me to talk," he went on, as he saw a slight smile on Roland's face, "for I am sure that I should be horribly cut up if I were in your position. Do you think it quite wise, Roland, your determination to stop here? I should have thought that you would be only too glad to be away from it all, but they say that you refused an offer that Mr. Johnstone made you of a situation in New York. Of course, you know your own business best, but if I had been in your place I should have jumped at it."

"Well, you see, Tom, it depends how you look at things. If I thought my father guilty I would go right away, quick enough, but as I am sure that he is not, you see I stop."

"Yes; Cissie White was telling me so this after-

noon, Roland. I heard before that she was saying so, but it was not until she told me herself this afternoon that I believed she was quite in earnest. You will excuse my saying so, but up till then I had thought as other people do; but when she said that you had assured her that your mother and yourself were thoroughly convinced that your father was innocent, I saw matters in an entirely different light. For I know that even on such a thing as that, you would not say anything that you didn't really believe; but in that case you don't mind my asking you why your father went away?"

"I don't mind your asking at all, Tom. I would much rather people spoke plainly what they think, instead of avoiding all allusion to the subject. I was away, you know, when father went, but from what he said to my mother I imagine that in some way, I can't say how, he felt that circumstances were against him, and that although he was perfectly innocent he was not in a position to prove it. He is a very sensitive, nervous man, and I believe he felt at the moment that anything in the world would be better than standing up before everyone who believed that he was guilty. I think that it was a terrible mistake; however, I can understand my father, whose disposition is entirely

different from mine, taking the course he did. Now, believing as I do that he is the victim of somebody else's crime, I made up my mind to stay here and brave it out, in order that, if it be possible, I may find out who has done it. How I am going to set about it I cannot tell you, but I may say that I will watch everyone who is connected with the bank, and possibly I may obtain some clue."

"I understand now, Roland, and quite agree with you as to your course. I am very glad that you have told me, for before, I could not make you out."

"Of course you understand, Tom, this is for you alone. If the real thief had an idea that he was being watched, it would make him careful and diminish my chances. I had rather people thought that I had stopped here from pure pig-headed obstinacy."

"You have not got a place yet, have you, Roland?"

"No; I have applied for several situations, but have always met with refusals; no doubt the people thought that I was better away out of this."

"I will speak to my father, if you don't mind, Roland, my giving him a hint of what your motives are. The old man is no talker, and I know he used

to like you very much, and I am sure he will do what he can for you. Is there anything else that I can do?"

"The thing I want to know," Roland said, "is if anyone connected with the bank here has been speculating in New York, but I don't know how to set about it."

"Let me see," Tom said thoughtfully. "You know my cousin Arthur went away last year to a broker's office there; of course he knows lots of clerks in other offices. Now, if you don't mind my writing to him and telling him frankly all about it, I am sure he will set to work, heart and soul, in the matter, and maybe he will find out something."

Roland eagerly agreed, and then for a couple of hours the lads sat chatting about school and other matters, and when Tom took his leave he felt that he had cheered his friend up and done him service.

## CHAPTER III

### MAKING A START

TWO days later Tom Fernlea again called on Roland.

"My father says will you look round to his office to-morrow morning? He did not tell me exactly what he wanted you for, but I expect it is all right. He was very much interested in what I told him yesterday, and when the old man takes a thing up he generally carries it through, so I expect there is something in the wind. What a pity it is, Roland, you did not see your father before he went away! I have been thinking it over, and it seems to me that if he had told you the whole circumstances, you would have been sure to have got some clue to work upon."

"That is what I have thought a hundred times, Tom. I hope that we shall hear from him ere long. I may tell you privately that he is in Canada. My mother has had two short notes from him. He is evidently in a sadly depressed state, but says he is well. The letters having Canadian stamps on them, we knew they came from there, but he says nothing about where he is. He is no doubt

afraid that he may be traced and his extradition demanded; but I hope soon that he will give us some address to which we can write to him. Directly he does, I shall send him a letter saying that I am settled here, and am going to make it the business of my life to prove his innocence, and shall implore him to write to me fully every detail he can respecting the affair, as his story may give me some sort of a clue as to the real thief."

The next morning Roland presented himself at the office of Mr. Fernlea, who was the leading lawyer of the town. He was at once shown into the inner office.

"Glad to see you, Roland; you have not been up at the house with Tom for the last month. He has been talking to me about this business of your father's. I quite take the view you do. I have been puzzled over the affair ever since I first heard of it, but your father's foolish flight deceived me, as well as the rest of us. I have no doubt what you say is correct, and that he has been so badly scared that he helped the game of the rascals who are the real criminals by bolting. However, although that may be your opinion and mine, it does not advance the case a bit. Your father, by his own act, has, so to speak, pleaded guilty, and has been condemned and sentenced accordingly by public opinion, and I

tell you frankly that I don't think it is likely you will ever obtain a reversal of the sentence. Still, I approve of the resolution which Tom tells me that you have taken. You could not have a nobler aim in life than to clear your father's name, and I am ready to aid you so far as to give you a seat in my office here with a salary of six dollars a week—no great thing, but enough to keep you. It is unlikely, to my mind, that you will ever get any clue which will aid you; but if you should do, I shall be most heartily glad to help you with my advice, or in any other way in my power. I had always a high respect for your father, and will be glad to assist you for his sake, but I may say frankly, I will do so especially because you are a great friend of my Tom; and although he is not particularly bright he has, I think, enough good sense to choose his friends wisely, and indeed I know now, from my own observation in this instance, he has done so. Now what do you say to my offer?"

"I am extremely obliged to you, sir; it is most kind of you, and is far better than anything I had hoped for."

"That is settled then; you may as well begin at once. Mr. Mullins will show you what you have to do."

Roland was indeed glad at the opening which Mr. Fernlea had made for him. The utmost he had hoped for was to obtain a position in a store, and as hitherto it had been intended that he should go to Harvard at the beginning of the next term, the thought of entering a store had gone somewhat against the grain. Now, with the position in Mr. Fernlea's office he might be considered not only to retain the position he occupied among his schoolfellows and friends, but to have taken the first step in a promising career.

When it became known in Brownsville that Mr. Fernlea had taken Roland Partridge into his office, there was much surprise and comment. More than one leading man in the place had made overtures to the lawyer for placing his son with him, but he had always declined, saying that he found that he and Mullins were able to get through the work, and that he did not care for the trouble of teaching young bears. There was a general feeling among these that the lawyer had, in some sort of way, done them a personal wrong by thus taking into his office the son of a defaulter, and one whom they had hoped would be obliged to leave the place from his inability to find employment there.

The lawyer, however, was not the man to

concern himself with the opinions of others, and would have been unconscious of the comments his decision had excited had not Tom told him, laughing, that he had outraged the feelings of all the old women in the place. Tom did not forget his promise to write to his cousin in New York, and to interest him in the search which Roland had undertaken, and did this so effectually that he received a letter by return saying that the writer would do anything he could to aid his old schoolfellow, and that he would set enquiries on foot among all his acquaintances in brokers' offices to find out, if possible, if any resident in Brownsville had lately been going into extensive speculations. A few days after Roland had entered upon his new duties Mr. Fernlea called him into his office.

"By the way, Partridge," he said, "I have been thinking over that matter of yours with the idea that I might perhaps hit upon some clue upon which you might work. I have not done so, for a curious difficulty at once presented itself. It naturally occurred to me that one of the methods to be first pursued was to find out through whose hands some of the stolen securities had passed, and then to trace them backwards; but when I came to think of it, it at once struck me that the list of the

securities stolen had never been published. This was so singular and so out of the usual course that yesterday I spoke to one of the directors of the bank, who had come in to smoke a cigar with me. He said it had been decided by the board that as the frauds had extended over some months, and as the defaulter had got safely away to Canada, there was no chance of being able to recover the securities, which by this time had probably passed through a dozen hands, and it was thought better for the credit of the bank, and so on, to let the whole matter drop, but of course the defaulter would be arrested at once if he ever showed his face in this country again.

"The course the directors have taken strikes me as being a very unusual one. I do not say that from some points of view it may not be a very wise one. The loss may be heavier than people suppose, and they may think it better not to call any further attention to it. It may be that it was policy, in fact I think perhaps it was so. Still, it is certainly unusual, and angry men do not always take the wisest course. I said as much to my friend. From what he said, I gathered that they had been to some extent influenced by a feeling of sympathy with you and your mother, and by their respect for

your father's former position in the place. He said that was the view the president took, and that they all fell in with it. It wasn't my business to make any remark, and I changed the subject, but I must own, the more I think it over the more unusual and singular it appears to me.

"No doubt they were influenced far more by the thought of the credit of the bank than by their sympathy with your father and mother, and I must say that I am glad I am not a large shareholder in the bank. Still, it is curious, and at any rate one result is that there are no clues to be obtained from following up any of the missing securities. Of course the directors all know what has been taken, but naturally they will keep their own council, and no help is to be obtained in that way."

Now that it was manifest that Roland Partridge was settled for good in Brownsville the little party who had from the first taken his side gained ground rapidly. Their argument was indeed unanswerable: now that he was there it was as well to make the best of it. Tom Fernlea and several others of his set would anyhow stick to him, and as he would be met in their company it was of no use pretending to ignore his presence; it would indeed only

cause unpleasantness and disagreement. Consequently, it was decided, with but few dissentient voices, headed by Percy Johnstone, that Roland Partridge should again be received into the set as if nothing unpleasant had taken place. Accordingly, he received an invitation to one of the first parties that was got up. He showed it to Tom Fernlea.

"Yes, I knew it was coming," Tom said, laughing. "We have won all along the line."

"Of course I shall not go," Roland said.

"Of course you will go," Tom replied. "Don't make a fool or a martyr of yourself. What has happened was natural enough. People thought your father had got into a scrape, and all the shareholders of the bank considered that they lost a lot of money by him. It was generally thought that you would be leaving the town, and naturally there was some sort of awkwardness about your joining in our fun as usual. Nobody thought any the worse of you, for it was, of course, not your fault; it was simply the awkwardness. Now that you are going to stay, the matter has altered. A month has passed, and the story has become an old one. Everyone will meet you just as before, and I shall be glad to have you with us again. Besides, if you were to refuse, it would place me

and the others who have stuck to you all along in a very uncomfortable position; for whenever you happened to be with us, and we met some of the people whom you refuse to visit, we should either have to pass without speaking, or you would have to stand aloof in the cold while we were talking to them. You made up your mind to live here, and it is of no use your putting your back up and going about like a moral hedgehog. So sit down like a good fellow, and write and say that you will be happy to accept the invitation; then go at once and secure a cutter for the day, and ask Cissie White if she will keep her old engagement. I am going to take Bessie Hartley, and I will arrange that two or three others shall start just at the same time and place, so we can all drive there together in a party."

Roland felt that his friend's advice was good, and, although it needed an effort to follow it, he sat down at once and wrote saying that he would be very glad to join the party. Then he went out and secured the cutter, and called at Mrs. White's and saw Cissie.

"I have been asked to join the sleighing party next Thursday, Cissie; will you let me drive you?"

"With pleasure, Roland. I have an outstanding

engagement with you, you know, and I have been hoping that you would call and remind me of it; in fact I made so sure you would, that I considered myself engaged and refused two invitations yesterday."

"That was good of you, Cissie; you have been my best friend all through this business."

"Not better than many others, Roland," she said quietly. "The two sides were pretty equally divided all along, and, now we have won, it is a triumph for us all."

Four cutters drew up together at Mrs. White's door at four o'clock on the Thursday afternoon. Tom Fernlea and Bessie Hartley occupied one; two of the others were filled with couples full of life and spirits; while Roland Partridge held the reins in the fourth. Cissie White was all ready to start and came out at once, and was soon muffled in the rugs by his side.

"Hoorah!" Tom Fernlea shouted as they started. "This is what I call jolly—a glorious day, capital company, and lots of fun before us!"

The whole party were in great spirits, and their laughter rose high as, at a rapid pace, they dashed along towards their destination. This was a barn belonging to the father of one of the party, who

lived ten miles away. Two or three of the boys had gone over the day before to sweep and decorate the place. The contributions of provisions had been sent over in a sleigh the previous afternoon, and two or three cutters had driven on an hour or two before the rest, to light the fire and prepare tea. A fiddler had been engaged, and after tea they were to dance, and drive back at ten o'clock by moonlight.

On the way the party overtook several of the cutters, and ten of them dashed up together in procession to the barn. The jingling of the bells and the joyous shouts brought the early arrivals to the door, and there was general greeting and shaking of hands, and Roland, who had rather dreaded the moment, soon felt himself at home again. First of all the horses had to be put up in the stables and some empty barns, and when this was done the boys made their way to the place of assembly. Some forty young people were gathered there, all in the highest spirits. A great wood fire blazed at one end, and over it hung a huge cauldron of boiling water. Tables of boards and rough trestles were arranged down the side of the barn. They were covered with snowy table-cloths, on which were placed a great variety of eatables.

A committee had decided what each of those

present should contribute. The most solid viands had been provided by the lads, and cold turkeys, chickens, and joints of meat showed that there was an ample store for the fifty who were to share the feast; while the variety of fruit-pies, cakes, and sweets of all descriptions showed that the girls had fully done their share. As soon as the last comers had arrived the meal began, and all did full justice to it, for the drive had sharpened their appetites. By the time it was finished it was growing dark, and while the boys cleared the tables and carried them outside, others lit the candles, placed in the sconces hired for the occasion and nailed against the sides of the barn, while the girls washed up the tea-things and packed them away in baskets ready for transport home on the following day. Then came five hours of dancing, and as the clock struck ten the boys hurried off for the horses, and the party started for home. Roland had enjoyed himself thoroughly. With the exception of Percy Johnstone and one or two others, everyone had behaved to him just as if the last month had been a blank, except perhaps that there was a little extra kindness and cordiality, as if each wished to show how glad he or she was to see him among them again.

"It was not so very dreadful, was it?" Cissie asked as they drove homeward.

"It was not dreadful at all," he said. "I think, Cissie, half our troubles arise from our own self-consciousness. We fancy people are thinking and talking about us, when in fact they are not giving us a thought; and if one does but grasp the nettle firmly, one finds that there is no sting in it."

The next morning Roland received a letter from his mother saying that she had again heard from his father, and although he had not precisely given his address, he had given indications by which a letter could be addressed to him under a name not his own; and Roland that night sat down and wrote to him at great length. He told him that he and his mother were convinced that he was the victim of another's misdoings, and that he had determined that if it was humanly possible he would find out the guilty party; but that before he set about doing so with any chance of success, it was absolutely necessary that he should be in possession of all the facts of the case, and he implored him to write fully and frankly to him, giving him every detail, however minute, which could bear upon it. He concluded by saying:

"My dear father, I know how very painful to

you the thought must be of appearing in the light of a suspected person in the presence of those who have known and respected you, but I cannot but think that it would have been better if you had made an effort and faced it out, for your innocence must sooner or later have been proved. However, for the sake of your good name and my mother's happiness, it is clearly incumbent on you now to aid us to the utmost in our effort to re-establish your good name, even if to do so you should have to come back and demand a trial. However, this is not necessary now, and I hope never will be. But the first thing of all is for us to understand exactly what the circumstances were that have caused a suspicion of this crime to fall upon you."

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## CHAPTER IV

### A CLUE

A WEEK later Roland received a letter from his father in answer to that he had written him. Its contents were as follows:

"My dear Roland, — I know that with your young heart and strong courage and a complete

and happy absence of nerves, you cannot but think it weak and cowardly of me to run away instead of waiting and fighting hard against circumstances I know as well as anyone can tell me that this is the course I should have adopted, and a score of times since I came away I have been on the point of returning and giving myself up, but each time when it has come to the point I have drawn back, and despised myself for my cowardice. But I cannot overcome it. I had an unhappy childhood under a stern father and a very unkind stepmother, and I think that any spirit I ever had was frightened out of me by the time I entered life—a shrinking, sensitive young fellow, conscious that I possessed fair abilities, but altogether unfit to fight my own way.

"For some years life was very hard to me, and my failing increased rather than diminished; and then by some good chance, certainly from no solicitation on my part, a course opened before me. I married. Your mother's firmness gave me support, and her love and goodness brought me happiness. Then when I obtained the post of cashier at the bank of Brownsville, it seemed that my trials were over. Although I could never bring myself to mix much with other men, I gained confidence in

myself, and believed that I had grown out of that extreme sensibility which had rendered my early years so unhappy. When the trial came upon me suddenly I found that I was mistaken. The thought of standing before the world accused of theft filled me with an overpowering fear, and rather than stay and face it I should have put an end to my existence. I know that you will scarcely understand this feeling. I know that you will think it weak and cowardly. I simply say, my boy, that I cannot help it, and that I can no more withstand it than a madman can check his impulses.

"And now I have told you so much, my son, I will tell you of the events of that evening. For some days I had been low and out of sorts; a haunting sense that something was wrong had been upon me. The last clerk, before leaving, had, as usual, laid the keys on the desk beside me. I told him he could go, as I had some hours' work before me. For an hour I went through the books, and then a sudden impulse seized me. I would examine some of the securities and see that none were missing. I took the keys and went down to the strong room, a thing which I never that I can recall had done after the bank was shut; took out some large parcels of shares and bonds, and locked the doors again. I

took them up with me to count in my room, and compare them with the books. I had just set to work when I heard the latch-key of the front door turn, and a minute later Mr. Johnstone came in. 'You are at work late, Partridge,' he said. 'I saw your light burning as I was passing. Why, hallo!' he said with a change of voice, 'what have you got all the securities up for? that is rather unusual, isn't it? Wasn't the strong room locked up before the clerks went away?' It had not struck me that there was anything strange about it, but the tone of the president's voice showed me that there was, and my old nervousness seized me as if with a sudden grip; and I have no doubt that the tone in which I explained my reason for going down into the strong room and bringing up the securities added to his suspicion. However, he said coldly: 'I am not aware of anything that should have excited your suspicions that all was not right, and induced you to unlock the strong room after the bank was closed. However, as you have brought up some of the securities, and I have nothing to do for the next half-hour, I will go through them with you.'

"He sat down by my side, and took the book containing the lists of the securities held by the

bank and I read out the number of the bonds. 'New York Centrals of five hundred dollars each.' Presently he said sharply: 'That does not tally with the book.' He ran his eye down and remarked: 'There are fifty missing here, running in successive numbers, between the last two you read out.' 'Perhaps they are out of place,' I said, and looked through the rest of the bonds, but they were not there. 'How do you account for this?' the president asked sharply. 'I cannot account for it,' I said, bewildered. 'Oh!' he said in an awkward tone, that particularly struck me. 'Here are your initials to all these figures, showing that they have been paid out. When were they redeemed?' I looked at the book; there were my initials sure enough. The bonds had not been redeemed at all, I was certain, but there were my initials. I looked at them thunderstruck.

"'I have the highest opinion of you, Mr. Partridge,' the president said, 'but this, you must admit, has a very curious appearance. Here I find you have, after the bank has closed, opened the strong room, and have got some of the securities up here, and I find that some of them are missing, but that the book is initialled by you, so that anyone else going through it with the securities would suppose

that they had been parted with in due course. Your own manner, if you will excuse my saying so, strikes me as altogether suspicious. However, let us go through some more.'

"Each bundle that we examined showed deficiencies, and although I had not brought up one-tenth of the bonds and securities, we found a deficiency of over a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. When we had done, Mr. Johnstone did not make a single observation beyond briefly pointing out the numbers of the missing securities, and added: 'You see, Mr. Partridge, I have but one course to follow. The bank has been robbed of an immense amount. How much as yet I have no means of knowing. I find you here with the securities brought out of the strong room at this unusual hour. These securities were entirely in your hands, and no one touches them but yourself. You can give me no explanation of the deficiency, and in every case your initials are appended, as a proof that they have been paid out in due course. Under such circumstances it is my duty to at once give you into custody.'

"I had been getting more nervous and confused as each fresh discovery was made, and the horrible consciousness of my position became stronger.

"'I am innocent, sir!' I exclaimed; 'before God I am innocent!'

"'In that case, Mr. Partridge, you will no doubt be able to prove it to the satisfaction of the jury. In my mind I confess the matter is clear. This book in which your entries are made is your own private property, and you keep it, I presume, in your own safe here, of which no one but yourself has a key, and it is not the sort of book that you are in the habit of leaving about. What you have done with the proceeds of the bonds I know not, but that you have taken them seems to me as clear as day. Of course the matter may be explained in some way. I hope that it will be. You have worked here with me for the last fifteen years, and I have hitherto not only had implicit confidence in you, but respect and liking. I would give anything to escape the situation in which I am placed, but my duty is clear. I must hand you over to the police.'

"'It will kill me!' I said. 'I am innocent, Mr. Johnstone, innocent as a child, but the disgrace of this will kill me!'

"He was silent for some time, and then he said: 'I am sorry for you, Mr. Partridge, with all my heart, and still more sorry for your wife. This money, I suppose, is hopelessly gone in some wild

speculation,'—I again protested, but he waved to me to be silent—'and irretrievably lost. For the sake of our long friendship and of the good lady your wife, I will suffer you to leave this office a free man. I will take no steps till morning. More than that, I will, if possible, keep the affair out of the hands of the police for the next twelve hours, by which time you ought to be across the frontier into Canada. I am risking a great deal in doing this, but I will do it, and I will satisfy my colleagues as well as I can. There, let no more be said. Go! and strive in future, by a life of strict honesty, to justify the course which I am taking.'

"I murmured something, whether of thanks or protest I know not, and, seizing my hat, went out into the air. Anyone who had noticed me on my way home must have thought me drunk, for I know that I staggered blindly along. Your mother will have told you what happened when I got home. That is the tale, Roland, and it makes things look very black against me. I was at the bank late, having opened the strong room and taken out the securities. The president, coming in and finding me so employed, went through the books with me, and discovered large deficiencies in the securities, which were never handled by anyone but myself. Worst

of all, in my private book, kept always under lock and key, are my initials, showing that I am cognizant of the securities having been parted with. Lastly, there is my flight and my manner against me. In answer I give my bare protest that I knew nothing about the securities being missing, and that though the initials appear indeed to be my own, that I certainly never signed them, though I own that the book was never to my knowledge out of my custody at any time, and that the safe in which it was kept was always locked up by me of an evening. That somebody has taken the securities is clear; also that somebody has got at my book and forged my initials.

"But it is only this bare assertion that I have against all the facts that seem to prove me guilty. I am going west. I have made the acquaintance of a gentleman, who has given me letters to two or three large store-keepers in Winnipeg, where, under another name, I hope to obtain employment. There, I trust, your mother will follow me. As for yourself, you have told me you have been taken by Mr. Fernlea into his office, and I trust, in spite of the terrible blot I have brought upon our name, that you will succeed. I have, however, no hope that you will be able to clear up the mystery of

which I am the victim. Still, I will not dissuade you from trying, and although I cannot hope, I shall pray, day and night, that success may attend your efforts."

Roland read the letter through and through until he had almost learnt it by heart. The next morning he took it in to Mr. Fernlea. "You know what my object is in remaining at Brownsville, Mr. Fernlea. I should like you to read this letter which I have received from my father. I need not say that I shall show it to no one else. I received it yesterday evening, and have been thinking it over all night, but I cannot see that it furnishes me with any clue such as I had hoped. But you may think differently."

Mr. Fernlea read the letter through to the end; then, without a word, he turned it over and re-read it. "Frankly, Roland," he said, when he laid it down, "is there no impression left in your mind after reading that letter?"

"Well, sir," Roland said hesitatingly, "it seems too absurd, but I cannot but think it a little strange that Mr. Johnstone should let my father go off like that."

"That is it," Mr. Fernlea said. "Johnstone has the reputation of being a pleasant gentleman adverse

to trouble and contention, and desirous of keeping on good terms with everyone, but he has nevertheless been always sharp enough on creditors to the bank, and has several times prosecuted when it appeared that the bank was the victim of sharp practices. I have always wondered that no attempt to discover and arrest your father was made when the loss was first discovered, which was, I understood, when Johnstone examined the bonds on the morning when your father was found missing; but now that I find he knew it before your father left, it is still more surprising to me that he should have let him go. He assumed, as it seems by this letter, that your father had spent all the proceeds of the robbery; but why should he assume that?

"Your father might still have had a great number of bonds in hand, and by arresting him at once a considerable number of the stolen securities might have been recovered. But this is not all. There is one very singular fact in the story. Your father was reading over the numbers of the bonds, when Mr. Johnstone suddenly exclaimed, 'That is wrong; there are fifty bonds missing between the last two numbers you read out. Where are they?' Why should he have said that? As I take it, the number of the bonds which had hitherto been read

corresponded with the number of those marked still in hand, that is to say, of those against which no initial had been placed. But it seems that these fifty were initialled. What was there, then, to call Johnstone's attention to the fact that they should have been there? That is very remarkable, to say the least of it."

Roland clasped his hands before him. "Oh, Mr. Fernlea, do you really think—"

"I don't think anything, Roland," Mr. Fernlea said sharply. "Mr. Johnstone is president of the bank, a prominent citizen, a man of unblemished reputation. I simply say that these facts, stated together, are singular, and I think they give you a clue. How that clue is to be followed up, I cannot at present suggest, I simply affirm that it is a clue. Now I want you to take the next train to Chicago. A client of mine wants some enquiries made about a house which he is thinking of purchasing. Here are the papers connected with it; you can study them as you go along. Of course you will go to the land office and see if there are any mortgages on it, and you will look up the titles."

Roland reached Chicago in the afternoon, where he at once set about making the necessary enquiries. The lawyers upon whom he first called at once

showed him the titles, which appeared to him to be correct, but of which he made an abstract for Mr. Fernlea's inspection. He then went to the land office and found that mortgages were registered on the house. From there he walked to the address of the owner, which he found to be in a small street. The house was shut up. He made some enquiries carefully among the neighbours, and found the reputation of the man was the reverse of favourable. It was now getting late in the afternoon, and he rode to the Central Telegraph office to send off a short message to Mr. Fernlea with the result of his enquiries. Two or three persons were writing their messages, and to his surprise he at once recognized in one of them Mr. Johnstone of Brownsville.

There was nothing in the least strange that the banker should be at Chicago, a hundred and fifty miles from Brownsville; and had it not been that Roland had been thinking of him all day, the meeting would not have given him a second thought. As it was, he drew back instantly and took his place at a distant desk to write his own message. "House mortgaged for 2500 dollars, title apparently good; vendor's house shut up, neighbours give bad account of him; I wait instructions." Just as he had finished,

Mr. Johnstone turned from the desk and went up to the pigeon-hole and handed in his message. A question or two was asked, and having paid his money he left.

Roland at once went to the same pigeon-hole. The girl was in the act of handing the message she had just received to an operator. "It is a cipher. What tiresome things those are! one has to be so careful with them, and there is no sense to help one."

"Mine is not a cipher," Roland said as he handed his in; "but my handwriting is not a very clear one. Your last message ought not to be difficult to make out, for I know Mr. Johnstone's writing is as clear as print."

"Johnstone!" the girl said, glancing back over the other's shoulder; "it isn't Johnstone, it is Westerton."

Roland felt a thrill shoot through him, but he answered carelessly: "Oh, is it? I was mistaken in my man then, I thought I knew him."

An hour later he received a telegram from Mr. Fernlea in answer to that he had sent. It simply said "Come back". He accordingly took the night train to Brownsville, and appeared at the office as usual in the morning.

"You have found out just what we wanted to know, Partridge. The man is a sort of acquaintance of my client, and wanted him to let him have a thousand dollars to-day, pending the examination of the titles. Of course he said nothing about the mortgage already on the house. My client believed it was all right, and would have advanced the money had I not begged him to wait twenty-four hours; so your trip has prevented him from throwing away a thousand dollars."

"I am very glad I went, sir, on my own account," Roland said, "for I have made a discovery which may be of importance. I have found out that Mr. Johnstone is in the habit of going over to Chicago and despatching telegrams there in the name of Westerton."

And he then related the incident of the telegraph office.

"That may be of importance," Mr. Fernlea said, "but we must not place too much importance upon it. He may possibly have sent off a message for some friend; still, it is a clue."

So Tom Fernlea thought when Roland told him the circumstances. "I must get you to write off again, Tom, to your cousin. You told me two days ago that, so far, he had not found out among his

acquaintances that anyone here connected with the bank was speculating. The thing now is to ask among them if anyone knows of a Mr. Westerton of Chicago, dealing in ventures of that sort."

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## CHAPTER V

### THE FOG CLEARS

A WEEK later Tom brought Roland a letter which he had received from his cousin. "My dear Tom,—The plot begins to thicken, and I think we are on the right scent. I was taking drinks with some other stock exchange men this afternoon, when I said, 'Does anyone know Westerton of Chicago?'

"'Yes, he is a client of ours,' one of them replied. 'He speculates pretty heavily in all sorts of stock and has dropped a lot of money the last six months. Do you know him? Because if you do, it is more than anyone in Chicago seems to. The chief has asked lots of men there about him, but no one seems to know the name. Of course it does not matter to us, because there is always ample cover, so we cannot burn our fingers; but it does seem

rum that a man who can go in for such heavy speculations should not be known to anyone there.'

"'No, I don't know him,' I said, 'but a man was asking me about him. I fancy he speculates with him too.'

"'Likely enough, these fellows always have two or three agents. We think it rather probable that it is a false name. There is many a man who dabbles in speculations, that none of his friends would ever believe did anything of the sort, such as clergymen, and merchants with solid businesses, whose credit would be injured if men thought that they speculated, and so on. We who are behind the scenes would astonish the world if we were to tell all we know.'

"However, I turned the subject, as I did not want him to suspect that I had any particular interest in Westerton. So, you see, Tom, the first step is gained, and we have found out that the respectable president of Brownsville Bank speculates largely under an assumed name. I don't know what Partridge's next move may be, but if I can give any further assistance you can rely upon me."

"What are you going to do next?" Tom said as he closed the letter.

"I haven't the least idea, Tom; but, at any rate,

I will consult your father. It is something to learn as much as we have, and we certainly seem to have got on the right clue. I never quite despaired, but I feel now pretty certain that we shall get to the bottom of it at last."

"It will do Percy Johnstone a world of good to take down his conceit a bit—a stuck-up monkey!"

"Don't say that, Tom. I felt it myself so much that I am sure I could not wish my worst enemy to go through such a thing."

"I don't wish Percy Johnstone any particular ill, Roland; but if somebody has got to suffer, I would rather it was him than anyone else in Brownsville. The insufferable airs that fellow gives himself are disgusting."

Mr. Fernlea was greatly interested when he heard the news. "I have no doubt whatever that you are on the right track now, Roland. Taking your father's letter, the points we noticed when we read it, and the facts we know now, that Johnstone is a heavy and unsuccessful speculator, seem to show without doubt that he is the real thief. His conduct in not arresting your father at once, and in allowing him without pursuit to get across the frontier, is accounted for now. He did not want anything like a public trial, for in that case the

numbers of the missing bonds must have been made public, and might in that way have been traced to him. I have no doubt whatever that he is the thief. But the question is, how are we to prove it?

"Of course if Johnstone goes on at this game and it continues to be unnoticed, there will be a smash up sooner or later; but even then the whole thing might not come out. If your father should come back here, they would be obliged to arrest him. But even if he denounced Johnstone as the real thief, we have nothing to go upon. The mere fact that he has speculated would in itself be no proof, or that he did so under an assumed name, for he would urge that many people do the same, and that he only adopted this precaution because, being in the position of president of the bank, he did not wish people here to know that he dabbled in shares. I own that I do not see what our next step is to be. It seems to me that we must wait and watch."

"That is what I was thinking, sir. Will you kindly give me leave to be away from your office till this is done? I should like to come here of a morning and go in and out as if I was in your employment, in case Mr. Johnstone was watching

me, which is not likely. He would then suppose that I am still working for you, but went out rather frequently on errands."

"Certainly, Roland, and if you want any money let me know. Anything that you may require to carry the matter through I shall be glad to let you have."

"Thank you, sir! but I hope I shall not be obliged to avail myself of your kind offer. My mother still has the proceeds of the sale of our furniture, and I need hardly say how glad she will be to spend it if she knows that there is a chance of proving my father's innocence."

Roland now kept a strict watch upon Mr. Johnstone's movements, and the next time that gentleman boarded the train at Brownsville, Roland did the same, but got into a third-class compartment forward. He was close at hand, however, when the banker presently took out his ticket, which was only for a town some thirty miles out; but when the train stopped at this station the banker ran into the office, and, procuring a ticket for Chicago, continued his journey to that city. When he alighted there Roland followed him. He went to a small house in a retired quarter, and on knocking at the door was admitted without question, and

Roland concluded that he habitually stayed there. He came out in a few minutes without the bag which he had carried in, and as soon as he was fairly away Roland, seeing that there was a notice in the window that there was an apartment to let, knocked at the door.

"You have a room to let," he said. "Can I see it?"

"Certainly, sir;" and Roland followed the woman upstairs. "The room will do very nicely," he said. "I shall not be a troublesome lodger, for I am a great deal away, and shall only sleep here occasionally; but I like to have a place of my own instead of always putting up at an hotel."

"That is just the case with our lodger downstairs, sir. He does not often sleep here—not more than one night in the week. He travels, I believe, for some house of business; but, as he says, he likes to have a quiet place to come to when here."

"He is your only other lodger, I hope?" Roland said, "for above all things I like quietness."

"Yes, sir; we only let these rooms. He is quiet enough. When he comes here he generally comes in the afternoon, but goes out directly, and comes back again at seven to his dinner; and he always goes off at six o'clock in the morning. A quieter

gentleman no one could wish to have for a lodger than Mr. Westerton."

Roland at once agreed to take the room, and, paying a deposit, said that he would come on the following day to take possession. My name is Rowlands, but it is not likely that anyone will come to enquire for me."

Having watched Mr. Johnstone off by the first train in the morning, Roland went to his lodgings, where he soon became friendly with his landlady, who was quite ready to gossip. She was full of praise for her other lodger. "I expect he has got a good situation," she said. "Money don't seem of any consequence to him. He always has the best of everything that is in season, no matter what it costs, and he has got quite a cellar of wine, and always takes a bottle with his dinner. I am sure the room was furnished nice enough for anything when he came; but he had all the furniture turned out, and put in fresh himself, and a heap of money it must have cost him, I can tell you; fresh paper on the walls, and looking-glasses, and pictures. They are nice rooms, indeed they could not be nicer—except that the sitting-room is spoilt by a big ugly safe he has got, to keep his papers in. It just spoils the room, as I told him. But he don't

seem to mind, so there ain't no reason why I should."

"I should like to see the rooms," Roland said. "Not that I can afford to furnish mine like them at present."

"I will show you them with pleasure, sir. Only, if you meets him and gets to know him afterwards, don't you let out that I showed you his rooms. He is a mighty perticular sort of gent, though he is so affable and pleasant."

The rooms were quietly and handsomely furnished, as Roland had expected. There was nothing whatever in them to give a clue to the identity of their owner. No letters or papers were lying about. Roland's attention was particularly drawn towards the safe. It was a strong, burglar-proof structure, by one of the best makers.

"Yes," he said, "I agree with you. The furniture is very handsome and good, but I should not care, if it were mine, to spoil it with that safe."

"He told me he had lost a valuable lot of papers once, and had determined that he would never run such a risk again, and so he got a safe that could be neither carried off nor broken into."

The next day Roland returned to Brownsville and

informed Mr. Fernlea of the progress that he had made.

"Capital, Roland! I shall certainly employ you in any detective work that may in future come into the office. The two next steps to be taken are clear enough, but it is not so easy to see how we are to take them. In the first place, we shall have to obtain a list of the missing securities, and the next to find out whether any of them are still in that safe. Those are the steps, but how on earth are we to take them? Your father would hardly be likely to remember the numbers of the missing bonds, and I could not ask one of the directors without taking him into our confidence, which I am averse to doing, for they all hold Johnstone in such respect that our idea would seem to them altogether preposterous."

"At any rate I could write to my father and ask him," Roland said. "He may not remember the numbers; it is hardly possible that he should, when there are such a lot of them missing; but he might be able to give us some hint how to set about it."

Accordingly Roland wrote a letter to his father informing him of the steps which he had taken and the discoveries which he had made.

"You see, father," he wrote, "that while Mr.

Fernlea has no more doubt than I have that Johnstone stole the securities which he accused you of taking, it is very difficult to bring the matter home to him; and as a first step it is absolutely necessary to get the numbers of the bonds, and that without there being a possibility of its coming to his ears that I am moving in the matter. Can you suggest any plan?"

A week later, when Roland had returned to his lodgings after dark, a man was standing at the gate.

"Roland, my boy, is that you?"

"Good heavens, father, how you startled me! I am glad indeed to see you again, but it is surely imprudent to venture back just at this moment, for were your presence here discovered it would upset all our plans. But come in. I have a key, and you can go up with me. But even if the woman of the house saw you, she would hardly be likely to recognize you, for she has not been settled in the town very long."

As soon as they were in his room Roland struck a light, and was able to look at his father. He would hardly have recognized him, so pale and haggard was he. "Why, father, have you been ill?"

"Not actually ill, Roland, though almost out of my mind at times; but I trust that it is nearly over. Your letter has given me new life, for it has made me hope that this black cloud which has fallen over me will be cleared away, and that I can again lift up my head and look my fellow-men in the face. I am ready now to give myself up, if Mr. Fernlea thinks that it will be the best thing for me to do, and to stand my trial. Before, I had nothing, save a bare negative, to oppose the evidence against me. Now there is at least a story to tell."

"We must not tell it at present, father; we must wait till it is complete. If there is any evidence in that safe at Chicago connecting Johnstone with the thefts, we may be sure that it would be destroyed the instant you appeared on the scene. The first thing, as Mr. Fernlea says, is to obtain a list of, at any rate some of the securities that are missing. We hardly hoped that you would be able to furnish them."

"No, Roland. I could tell you the stocks to which they belonged, but not the numbers. And, so far as I know, there is but one way of doing so besides that of obtaining the list from one of the directors, which, you said in your letter Mr. Fernlea thinks would be dangerous to do."

"And what is that, father?"

"It is for me to go to the bank and get the book which Johnstone and I went through together that night."

"But how are you to do that, father? It is probably in the safe if it is still in existence."

"I supposed so, Roland. But when I went away I never thought of leaving the keys behind me, and found them days afterwards in the pocket of my overcoat. Unless they have changed the fastenings, there is nothing to prevent my unlocking the door, going up to my old room, entering it, and opening the safe as usual. There would be no occasion even for a light, for I know the feel of the book so well, with its locked clasp, that I could tell it in the dark if I put my hand on it."

"But it would be an awful risk, father, were you detected. You would be accused—" And he hesitated.

"Of trying to rob the bank for a second time," Mr. Partridge said. "Well, if necessary, I must run the risk."

"At any rate, father, before you attempt it I must speak to Mr. Fernlea. He has been so good a friend throughout the business that we must not move a single step without consulting him. I will

go up and see him at once. Before I start I will tell the woman of the house that I have a friend come to stop with me for a day or two. She has a spare room, and will get it ready for you. Will you have some supper before I start?"

"No, no, Roland. Go at once, and I will have a nap in your easy-chair while you are away, for I have travelled without stopping once since I got your letter. I am not so strong as I used to be."

Mr. Fernlea listened attentively to Roland's account of his interview with his father.

"It is a dangerous step to take," he said thoughtfully, "but I don't know that I can propose anything better. Of course, if he is taken, I should come forward and declare that he was my client, that he has been wrongly accused all through, and that he was only going to the bank for the purpose of possessing himself of the book which was his private property, in order to obtain the list of the missing securities, that he might, if possible, trace their course. I should reserve suspicion about Johnstone until the trial, but, of course, there they would have to accuse him of the original theft of the securities. I will go back with you now and talk to him myself."

"My poor friend," he said as he entered the room

where Mr. Partridge, too anxious to sleep, was walking restlessly to and fro, "I see that all this has told upon you sadly. However, I hope that we are in a fair way of putting matters right at last. I tell you frankly, I thought at the time that it was foolish of you to run away as you did. But I think now that it has turned out the best, for we had little or no defence beyond a bare denial, whereas we could make out a strong case of suspicion anyhow against Johnstone from what we know already."

"Do you approve of my plan for the recovery of the book?"

"Yes, if it can be carried out. But I fear that they are likely to have changed the locks. That is the first suggestion which the new cashier, on learning that the keys were missing, would make."

"I did not think of that till I was half-way here, but I am afraid that it is only too likely."

"The best plan, father," Roland said, "will be to give me the keys of the door. I can go round to-night and try it. If I find it opens it, you can carry out your plan to-morrow night; if not, there is no use your running the risk of being detected."

"But you might be taken in my place, Roland?"

"Not at all, father. I am not going to enter the

bank. I shall simply put the key in the lock and turn it, and see if the door opens, and I shall take good care that no one is near when I do it. If by any possible chance I were caught at it—I don't see, though, how such a thing can happen—I should simply say that, having come across the key, I went for a matter of curiosity to see if it was the one that would open the bank door."

"Yes, I don't think there would be much risk in that," Mr. Fernlea agreed. "You had better go at once, Roland, and I will remain with your father until you come back. If by any chance you are detected in trying the door, it would be far better that it should be at this time of the evening, when you might be passing by accidentally, and have acted upon the impulse to see if the key fitted, than if you were to go down in the middle of the night."

In twenty minutes Roland returned.

"A new lock has been put upon the door, father. The key won't go in at all."

Mr. Partridge gave an exclamation of disappointment.

"Don't trouble about that," Mr. Fernlea said. "I don't think that it matters very much. You see, the list would only be perfect so far as the securities you went through which was only a small propor-

tion of those in the hands of the bank. It is essential that we should get the entire list. It might happen that he has parted with those which you know to have been stolen, while he may have some of the others still in his possession. I will think the matter over to-night, and see if I can hit upon a plausible excuse for wanting to get the list of the missing securities without being obliged to hint at the purpose for which we require them."

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## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

IN the morning Mr. Fernlea said to Roland, when he appeared at the office, "The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that it would be dangerous to try and get any of the directors to act with us. Johnstone virtually runs the concern, and the others know very little about it, and I do not think that I could get any of them to move. The best man that I can think of is Hertman. He is one of our most prominent men of business, and is a large shareholder in the bank, and is intelligent and independent; and if he were convinced that wrong had

been done he would take it up. Hitherto he has, of course, been under the impression that your father was guilty, and expressed himself freely in condemnation of the policy of the directors in allowing him to escape and in hushing matters up. He is not a client of mine, but I am concerned in business transactions with him, and I think he has a respect for my judgment, as I have for his. I have written a note saying that I want to speak to him on business, and shall be glad if he will come over to my office, or I will go over to his, as will be most convenient to him. Will you take it across at once? His office is in Exchange Street."

Mr. Hertman glanced at the note, and told Roland to say that he would be across in a few minutes.

"What I am going to say, Mr. Hertman, will surprise you," Mr. Fernlea said, when his visitor had taken a seat. "You are, I am aware, one of the largest shareholders in the bank."

"I am sorry to say that I am," Mr. Hertman said. "I wish I were not, but I can't get rid of my shares except at a very heavy loss. That mysterious affair three months ago has greatly depressed the value of the stock, for, in fact, no one seems to know what is the amount of the losses we suffered. The directors told me that the matter was kept quiet to

avoid a run upon the bank, and in that respect no doubt they succeeded, and public confidence seems pretty well restored. I have no idea as to how we have come out of it."

"Well, Mr. Hertman, it may surprise you when I tell you that in this matter I am acting on behalf of Partridge."

"What! the absconding cashier, Mr. Fernlea?"

"Just so. I have always entertained a strong idea that he was innocent and was the victim of others, and I am happy to say I am now far on my way to be able to prove it."

"You don't say so!" Mr. Hertman said in surprise; "why, I thought there was no doubt in the matter."

"So most other people thought," Mr. Fernlea said dryly, "and certainly his running away instead of staying to meet the charge was terribly against him, but it has not proved so unwise a step as I thought it would. Had he been arrested and tried then, it would have gone hard with him; but as matters have turned out, things have come to light which alter the complexion of the case. You have heard, perhaps, that I took his son into my office."

"Yes, I heard that," Mr. Hertman replied. "I thought that it was a piece of mistaken kindness on your part, and that the young fellow would

have done better to leave the place and begin life elsewhere."

"I took him, Mr. Hertman, in order that he might remain upon the spot to devote himself to getting at the bottom of this mystery, and I may tell you at once that he is within a short distance of success."

Mr. Fernlea then related the whole of the incidents connected with the search.

"There can be little doubt that you are right in the matter," Mr. Hertman said, when he had concluded, "and that this man Johnstone is really the culprit. A great wrong has clearly been done, and you can command my assistance to the utmost in aiding you. What is wanted—funds? I will draw you a cheque for any amount that you may require."

"Thank you, Mr. Hertman! From my knowledge of your character I expected nothing less, but that is not my object in taking you into our confidence. What we want is the list of the securities stolen."

"I should doubt," Mr. Hertman said, "whether there is any such list in existence. One of the directors, who is a personal friend of mine, told me at the time of the meeting that the president ex-

plained to them what shares and scrip were missing, and their value, and that the board had individually pledged themselves to keep absolute silence until the meeting of shareholders, which will not take place for other six months yet. Certainly if your suspicions are correct, and I think they are, it would be greatly to the interest of the president that nobody except himself should have such a list.

"In that case," Mr. Fernlea said, "the only way of getting at them is to obtain Partridge's private book. There has been no fresh cashier appointed, has there?"

"No; the chief clerk is acting as cashier at present; the appointment has not been filled up."

"Do you possess any influence with him?"

"Yes, a good deal; he got his appointment as clerk there some fifteen years ago from my recommendation. He is the son of a man with whom I am closely connected in business matters."

"Then perhaps you might manage it for us. What I should propose, if you will consent, is, that some afternoon when we know that Johnstone has just left for Chicago, you should see this man, and tell him you have a clue to some of the missing securities, but that it is necessary for you to ascer-

tain the exact numbers, and that you think you can do so by an examination of the book kept by Partridge, on which, as I understand, Johnstone scored with red ink some at least of those found to be missing. You might say that you only wanted it for two or three hours, and that if he would let you have it, you would pledge yourself to place it in his hands again the first thing the next morning. You could, of course, say that, for the success of the endeavour you are making, it is absolutely necessary that no one, not even the president and directors, should have an idea that anything was being done in the matter."

"I think I can do that," Mr. Hertman said. "Smithson will naturally think that if anything comes of it he will get some credit for aiding us in the matter."

"Very well, then," Mr. Fernlea said; "I will let you know next time that Mr. Johnstone goes to Chicago. He generally takes the trip once a week, and to-morrow is his usual day."

The next evening the book was handed to Mr. Fernlea.

"Can I be of any further use?" Mr. Hertman asked.

"Well, if you can spare two or three hours I

should be glad if you would go through the lists with us. Partridge is in the next room waiting."

"Certainly I will. I tell you I have taken up this business in earnest, and am prepared to help you in every way possible."

A minute later Mr. Partridge was called in.

"I am glad to see you," Mr. Hertman said, "and regard you as a deeply wronged man, and would spend my bottom dollar, if necessary, in clearing up this business."

The three men at once sat down to their work, and turned to the pages where Mr. Johnstone had scored a line of red ink against the securities found to be missing.

"We will take down the numbers and descriptions of the marked ones first," Mr. Fernlea said, "because as to these there can be no mistake."

This was soon done.

"Now, Mr. Partridge, will you look at these initials closely; are they yours?"

After a long examination Mr. Partridge said, "They are very like mine."

"Well, let us compare them with the real ones," Mr. Fernlea said, producing a magnifying glass.

"I see a difference," Mr. Hertman said. "Do you see, in your own initials, you do not take your hand

off the paper at all, while in these there is a little break; the W. J. are written together, but the writer has paused before making the P. The manner in which you form the letter P is rather a peculiar one, while the W. and J. are easy enough to imitate; and I expect that after having finished the first letters he looked at the copy before commencing the third. You see," he continued, "the upstroke from the J to the P is as nearly as possible continuous, but with the glass you can make out that sometimes the lines do not quite touch, and at others they overlap slightly."

The others at once perceived the point that he had indicated, and they now went through the whole book and without difficulty marked off the shares against which the false initials had been placed. It took them five hours' work, and it was just midnight when they concluded.

"We have got the list complete now," Mr. Fernlea said.

"And a very long one it is," Mr. Hertman said. "Seven hundred thousand dollars! why, it is more than the called-up capital of the bank. He never told the men who examined the books on the day after the affair was first known, what the real extent of the loss was, or they would never have

signed that announcement reassuring the public. However, there is a reserve to call up, and if things are put into good hands the bank may pull through yet. Now what is the next step that you propose, Mr. Fernlea?"

"I intend myself to go to New York to obtain the assistance of the police and to call upon the broker who has acted for Westerton—that is, for Johnstone. I shall tell him frankly we are tracing an extensive robbery, and that we have reasons to believe that large numbers of the foreign securities have passed through his hands, sent to him from Chicago. I shall show him this list, and ask him if he has dealt in any of them. If he says yes, we shall then have nothing to do but to go to Chicago and obtain a warrant for the arrest of Westerton. We will not bring Johnstone into it. Then the next time he goes over, we will pounce upon him. I should like you to give me an authority to ask for you, as one of the principal shareholders of the bank."

"I will go with you myself," Mr. Hertman said. "I shall have to go there on business in a few days anyway, and can kill two birds with one stone."

"I suppose you will take Mr. Partridge with you?"

"Certainly. I shall have to tell the whole story to the commissioner of police, and he will want what I say confirmed, both as to the theft and the numbers of the missing securities."

The mission to New York was attended with complete success. The broker, when called upon by Mr. Fernlea, Mr. Hertman, and the chief commissioner himself, had no hesitation in disclosing his dealings with Westerton. It was found that a large proportion of the securities noted had passed through his hands.

"I have had my own suspicions that something was not quite right with that gentleman lately. Two months ago he made a very lucky hit in corn. Up to that time he had been unfortunate; and, as you see, all those securities have been sold by him through me to meet his losses. Since then he has been buying. But what struck me as singular was that he insisted upon getting back the very securities he had parted with. He had a special reason, he said, for wanting these particular shares and no others. It gave me a lot of trouble, because the buyers had often parted with them, and sometimes they had gone through two or three hands, and I had to offer something over the market price to get them again. However, with the exception

of sixty thousand dollars' worth, I have got them all, or rather, he has got them, and I am in treaty for most of those he still wants. He said in his letter that it was a crotchet of his, and I put it down that he was either a crank or a thief, and yet, even in the latter case, I could not see any reason for his wanting to get into his hands securities which he had once parted with."

"I can only suppose," Mr. Fernlea said, "that he was afraid that at the meeting of the shareholders they would insist upon a committee being appointed to investigate the whole affair, and the list of the missing securities would then be published, in which case they would, of course, be traced back to him—at least to Westerton."

"Then his name is not Westerton?"

"It is not," the chief commissioner said. "But I don't think we will mention just at present what his real name is, though you are likely to know it before long. Now", he went on, when they had left the broker's office, "our course is clear enough. I will send one of my men with you gentlemen to Chicago, with instructions to the local police to aid him in the arrest of one Westerton on the charge of stealing a large number of valuable securities, the property of the Brownsville Bank. And I

think I can congratulate you and the other shareholders of the bank on what you have just heard. I fancy it likely that in that safe will be found the whole of the missing property, with the exception of the small number not yet bought up, and even these will probably be recovered, for of course the broker has already received money to buy them with."

Five days later Roland Partridge, looking out from his window at his lodgings in Chicago, saw six men stop before the house. He went quietly downstairs and opened the door, and said, "That is the room."

The door opened and the party entered.

"Westerton, *alias* Johnstone, I arrest you on the charge of stealing securities, the property of the Brownsville Bank."

There was an exclamation, a slight struggle, and then Mr. Johnstone stood handcuffed among his captors. The safe stood open. Mr. Fernlea and Mr. Hertman stepped forward and glanced at its contents.

"It is as we expected," the former said. "I cannot say how many are missing, but these are the securities stolen from the bank."

"I have been recovering them," Mr. Johnstone

said hoarsely. "I have been purchasing them so as to save the shareholders the loss. Another week and I should have got them all. I received a batch to-day, and there are only fifteen thousand dollars' worth missing."

"That may be true enough," Mr. Hertman said, "but we know that you stole them all in the first place—that you yourself stole them, and put the blame on your unfortunate cashier."

The excitement in Brownsville on the absconding of the cashier of the bank was as nothing to that caused when the local paper came out with the following telegram from its correspondent at Chicago:—

"A most important arrest was effected here this evening in the person of a man known as Johnstone, *alias* Westerton. This man has for months occupied a lodging in Hale Street in this city. He only used it one night a week, and was supposed by Mrs. James, the landlady—a person of the highest respectability—to be a commercial traveller. This evening he was arrested by an officer who came down especially from New York, aided by our own active and intelligent police authorities, on the charge of stealing a great number of valuable securities, the property of the Brownsville Bank,

which institution was, as our readers may remember, threatened with a run, towards the conclusion of last year, by the discovery of a robbery, which was at that time supposed to have been effected by Mr. William Partridge, the cashier of the bank.

"The extraordinary part of the business is, that the man Westerton turns out to be the president of the bank, Mr. James Johnstone, who has hitherto borne the highest of characters, being considered quite the leading citizen of Brownsville. The whole circumstances are most romantic, and I shall be able to telegraph further details for your next edition. I am enabled to state that this startling discovery has been brought to light chiefly by the efforts of Mr. Roland Partridge, son of Mr. William Partridge, hitherto suspected of the theft. Mr. Partridge has been assisted by those well-known citizens of Brownsville, Mr. Fernlea and Mr. Robert Hertman. These gentlemen are, with the two Mr. Partridges, at present in Chicago, and will, I understand, leave by the first train in the morning for Brownsville. The prisoner will also be taken over in course of the day in charge of the police, and will be charged before the justices of your city with his offence. I am informed that the greater portion of the securities stolen have been recovered by the police, so

that the bank is not likely to be the loser of more than a few thousand dollars by this crime."

Brownsville could at first scarcely believe the news, but enquiries elicited the fact that Mr. Johnstone was absent, and that the police had, late the previous evening, on the receipt of a telegram from Chicago, gone to his house and placed seals upon the drawers and cabinets. The machines of the *Brownsville Gazette* were insufficient to cope with the demands for papers of the second edition, which gave full details of the affair, and were bought up even more eagerly than the first.

There was quite a crowd at the station to meet the first train from Chicago, and a number of gentlemen who had previously known Mr. Partridge, pressed forward to shake hands with him and to congratulate him as he alighted from the train with his two friends. Roland did not accompany him, having left the train two stations back to fetch his mother, to whom the glad news had been telegraphed on the previous night. Mr. Partridge could not himself go, as his presence would be necessary at the court. There was no feeling of pity for Mr. Johnstone. Later on he received sentence of five years' penal servitude—a sentence that would have been heavier had not the court believed his statement that he

had intended to return the stolen securities to the bank. But the effect of this was in public opinion neutralized by his conduct in throwing the blame on to Mr. Partridge, and in allowing him to suffer for his guilt.

Mr. Partridge was forced to overcome his objection to public gatherings so far as to receive a banquet and presentation from his fellow-townsmen, and was unanimously elected by the shareholders of the Brownsville Bank president of that institution. Mr. Johnstone's family left the town immediately after his arrest, and Percy Johnstone is at present a clerk in a store in Broadway. Roland Partridge is still in Mr. Fernlea's office, and will shortly, it is said, be admitted as a partner in the business. About which time, it is also rumoured, he will enter into another partnership with a young lady who was his staunchest defender in his dark days.

# A FRONTIER GIRL

## A TALE OF THE BACKWOOD SETTLEMENTS

A GIRL of fifteen, slim and lithe in figure—although it would scarcely have suggested itself to a casual observer, so disfigured was it by the thick, homespun garment in which she was clothed—stood looking out from the door of a log cabin over the lake which lay a hundred yards away. Her face would have been almost childish had it not been for a certain alertness of expression and keenness of glance which would never have been seen in the face of a town-bred girl, nor in one brought up in a country where the only danger ever to be encountered was in crossing a meadow in which a bull was grazing. Mary Mitford was the only child of the settler who owned the cabin. He had at one time been a well-to-do farmer, but he had fallen into difficulties and been obliged to give up his farm and travel

farther west, where land could be had for the taking up.

The times had been peaceful, and although the spot he had fixed upon was ten miles from the nearest village, that did not deter him from settling there. It was a natural clearing of some twenty acres in extent. The land was fertile, and sloped gradually down to the lake. A clear spring rose close to the spot where he had determined to make his house, and as to Indian troubles he shrugged his shoulders and said: "If the Indians break out I shall only have to shut up my cabin and move into the village; but as there is no house nearer than that, no tracks in the forest leading past my place, and nothing worth stealing, it is hardly likely that the red-skins will come my way. They are more likely to attack the village than they are to visit my shanty."

He had now lived on his little farm for four years, and had had no reason to regret his choice. The cabin originally built had been enlarged. He had a horse to do his ploughing, and some ten acres under tillage; a score of half-wild pigs roamed by day in the forest, picking up their living there, and returning of their own accord to their sties in the evening for their one regular meal. Five or six

cows and a score of sheep grazed on the untilled ground; geese and ducks waddled down to the lake at daybreak and returned at nightfall; two or three dozen chickens found plenty of grubs and worms to eat between the rows of corn and vegetables on the tilled ground. Altogether John Mitford was doing well. He went down once a week with ducks, geese, fowls, and vegetables to the village, using a large boat, on which he had built a sort of cabin where he often passed the night on the lake, returning home to breakfast with a goodly store of wild duck he had shot, and sometimes a stag which he had overtaken as it swam across the lake.

So well had he done, indeed, that he had settled to take on three or four hired men to extend the clearing by cutting down and grubbing up the forest. He had been ably assisted by his wife, who not only looked after the house, but assisted on the farm at busy times; while Mary, who was but nine years old when they came there, made herself as useful as she could at light work, fed the animals, cooked when her mother was in the fields, and as she grew older spent a good deal of her time in a small birch-bark canoe her father had bought for her in the village. She added a good deal to the family store by fishing; not only was the house

well supplied, but she enabled her father to take a large basketful down when he went to the village, where the people were all too busy to fish for themselves.

She also learned to use her father's rifle with a skill equal to his own, and could hit any duck that came within range of the weapon. From time to time there were rumours of trouble with the Indians; but these either proved to be without foundation, or the troubles took place at distant spots on the border. Sometimes Mary's mother accompanied her father to the village when stores had to be laid in, and materials for garments purchased for which their own homespun cloth was unsuitable. They had started together this morning, and the three men who had been engaged were to return with them. These were to be accommodated in an outhouse until they had built a log cabin for themselves, and a store of groceries, saws and axes, blankets, and other necessaries for their use were also to be purchased and brought up.

They had, when the settler had gone down on the previous week, heard that councils had been held among the village elders as to the rumoured Indian troubles, and as to the best method of defending the place should the enemy threaten an

attack. John Mitford had received many warnings, but he paid little attention to them, and while speaking lightly of them to his wife, remarked with a laugh, that with the hired men they would have quite a garrison.

"They will all bring their guns up with them," he said, "and it will scarcely be worth the while of any Indians to attack us when they know that we should be able to make a stout fight, and that even if they took the place there would be nothing to pay them except our scalps for the loss of life they would suffer. The men I hired to-day are all accustomed to border work, and claim to be good shots. I can say as much for myself, and Mary here is a good bit better than I am, and you have learned to make very fair practice, wife."

"I have not had time for much of it, John, but at least I think that I could scarcely miss an Indian at fifty yards; however, as you say, we have been hearing these rumours every three or four months since we settled here, and nothing has ever come of it."

So little did they think of the matter that when they started in the scow an hour before daybreak no allusion was made to it, and Mary was to have supper ready for them on their return.

"Remember that there will be six, Mary, and you will have to provide plentifully for the men. It would never do to give them a bad impression on their arrival. We shall be back before nightfall."

When they had gone, Mary went about her usual work—let the pigs out, and saw them well on their way towards the forest, the ducks started down to the lake and the chickens to the fields, while the geese began to graze in the meadow between the house and the lake, where the horse and other animals joined them as soon as they were let out. Having attended to these matters, she went about the work of the house. From time to time she came to the door to see that all was going on well. It was three o'clock in the afternoon when she heard a sudden squeal of alarm in the forest, and a minute or two later the pigs came galloping out of it. Accustomed as Mary was to all the noises of the place, the sudden outcry startled her.

"What can have frightened the pigs?" she said to herself; "it may be that a mountain lion has sprang down upon one of them, but it may be that there are Indians."

She went back at once into the house, pulled out the moss from the loopholes that had been made

when it was built in case they should ever be attacked, and, going from one to another, gazed into the forest. Before doing so, she had looked to the priming of the three rifles and two shot-guns that hung on the walls. She could see nothing, but observed that there was a general feeling of uneasiness among the animals. The horse had stopped feeding, and with ears outstretched seemed to be listening for sounds in the forest; the cows, after staring about, commenced to walk in the direction of their byres; and some geese which were near the edge of the lake, gave warning cries, keeping close together, and also moved towards the house. The girl had heard so many stories of Indian raids on lonely settlements that she felt sure that an attack would not be made until after dark. They could hardly know that she was alone in the house, and would not risk losing lives by an advance against it in broad daylight.

As she moved from loophole to loophole she thought over what was best to be done. Although the Indians might wait till nightfall, if they saw no advantage in attacking before, they would assuredly fall upon her father's party as they landed, as, with the advantage of such a surprise, they might expect to slaughter them without

resistance. It was hardly likely that any large party could be in the wood. She had heard her father often say that any body of Indians on the war-path would make straight for the settlements and would not waste their time upon isolated farms, though stragglers from the main body might do so.

"I must do something at once," she said to herself at last; "if the Indians see no one about they may crawl up here, and though I might shoot one or two of them, I could not be on all sides of the house at once. If I were killed, father and mother would be sure to fall into the trap. From the way those geese behaved I believe it must be a party who were travelling down the lake, and, knowing of the clearing, they landed some little distance away and moved along the shore. As canoes often traverse the lake, and the Indians have an eye for every detail, they would know that its occupants possess a scow, and that as it was not there some of the inhabitants were certainly away. They would therefore probably wait until their return before making an attack on the hut, which could be easily captured; while, were they to attack the cabin at once, the firing might be heard, and those on the scow being thus warned might go at once to

the village, where their report would give the alarm to the inhabitants, and so put them on their guard against the attack that was to be made upon them by the main body that night."

All these things were thought over by the girl. She had so often listened to the stories of Indian raids told by passing hunters who put up for the night, that she was able to judge the situation as accurately as an older settler might have done. She was pale, but this was the only sign of her consciousness that her life was in extreme danger. She knew that if an attack had not been made at once, the Indians must have good reasons for waiting. From time to time Indian canoes had stopped there, and the occupants had landed in order to exchange skins and other articles for tobacco and powder, and so save themselves the journey down to the settlement, and they would know that her mother, father, and herself were the sole occupants. The absence of the scow showed that her father was away, and that the place could be easily captured, though perhaps not without loss of blood, for women of the frontier were usually able to use a rifle on an emergency. She went out occasionally, took some food for the pigs, and hung up some clothes to dry, in a quiet and unconcerned manner,

in order to show that no suspicion was entertained that Indians were in the neighbourhood.

At last she determined upon the best course to be pursued. It was above all things necessary to warn her parents. That the attempt might cost her her life did not weigh in the slightest; she would certainly be killed if she remained there. There was just a possibility that she might succeed in saving their lives as well as her own by action. Once in her canoe she might escape; it was very small and light. Constant exercise had so strengthened her arms that she could make it fly through the water at a speed at which few of the Indians with whom she had sometimes tried a spin could surpass. The canoe or canoes, however, in which the red-skins had arrived were doubtless paddled by three or more men, and these would certainly overtake her. It was the knowledge that this was so that had prevented her from making an earlier start. To give her a chance of getting away she must carry a rifle with her, and once the lurking enemy, who were doubtless watching her every movement, perceived that she was armed they would guess at once that she was conscious of their presence, and would rush out and tomahawk her before she reached the water's edge.

At last she decided upon a plan. Taking off her gown, she fastened the rifle with a cord round her body. The butt was against her shoulder and the barrel came down just below her ankle, projecting but an inch or two below her gown. When she put it on again, even the sharpest Indian eye could scarcely notice this as she walked through the grass. She had passed the rope but once round her body, and had tied the end in a bow so that she could in a moment unloose it on reaching the canoe, for it would be impossible for her to kneel down with the rifle in its present position. She took a powder-horn which she slung over her shoulder by a cord, and put a dozen bullets into her pocket. Then she put some grain into a basket, and was ready to start. Before leaving the house she stood for a few minutes in silent prayer, for she was unable to kneel; then she went out.

It needed a great effort to saunter leisurely along, but the thought of her parents' danger nerved her, and she went from animal to animal, giving each a handful or two of grain, calling them to her, and singing in a voice in which at first there was a little quaver, but which soon rang out loud and fearlessly. Fortunately the horse and one or two of the cows were feeding close down

by the lake. As she went her hopes rose. After feeding them she strolled in a leisurely way towards her canoe, and, standing close to it, looked over the water, then she went down to its edge, and gazed down the lake as if looking for the returning scow. After standing thus for a minute or two she returned to the canoe, pulled at the ends of the rope under her loose dress, and let the muzzle of the rifle drop to the ground. She stooped over the canoe as if arranging the paddles, and placed the rifle in it. The action, she thought, could hardly have been seen by the Indians, for the trees were two hundred yards on each side of her. She then lifted the light canoe and carried it down to the water.

This was the critical moment. The Indians might allow her to go unmolested, thinking that she was only going for a short paddle to pass away the time until her parents returned, and in that case they would crawl across and enter the cabin in order to take the party by surprise as they unsuspectingly strolled up from the scow. On the other hand, if they thought that she had had any idea of their presence, and was going to warn her father, they would know the coveted scalps would be lost if they did not succeed in catching her. As

she seated herself in the canoe and took up her paddle, her heart beat high with hope, but, glancing towards the trees, she saw six red-skins running at full speed from the edge of the forest. What she hadn't reckoned upon had occurred. Their sharp eyes had caught the flash of the sun upon the barrel of the rifle as she put it in, and they at once guessed that she was aware of their presence, and was endeavouring to escape.

It was well that she had lost not a moment's time after placing the canoe in the water. Her nervousness had now passed away, and with rapid but steady strokes she drove the light craft ahead, and was fifty or sixty yards out on to the lake before the Indians reached the spot she had left. They had been silent hitherto, but their yells rose fiercely as they fired shot after shot; but the powder sold to the Indians was always of a poor quality, and though the balls fell close to her none struck her. The red-skins did not wait to reload, but ran back to the forest, and a minute after they had disappeared among the trees she saw a canoe with three paddlers dash out from some bushes in which it had been concealed. She had but some three hundred yards' start, and although she was rowing her hardest, looking over her shoulder from

time to time, she found that they were gaining upon her. When a mile had been passed she was but seventy or eighty yards ahead. With a sweep of her paddle she turned the canoe broadside to her pursuers, laid her paddle in, seized her rifle, took a steady aim, and fired.

The report was followed by a yell, and the Indian in the bow dropped his paddle and fell back. At other times, at so short a distance, she would not have missed her aim at the centre of his chest by a finger's breadth; but though she had held her breath in order to steady her rifle, her arms were quivering from her exertions, and she had only hit him on his right shoulder, the red mark on the brown skin showing where he was struck. A moment later she was again on her way. The fall of the man against the redskin behind him had nearly upset the Indian canoe, and she had gained several lengths before the pursuit was continued. She looked round, and saw that the wounded man was again kneeling in his place. His paddle had fallen overboard when he was struck, and even had it not been so, he could have rendered but slight assistance to his comrades with but one hand available.

"It is lucky that he was not killed," she said

to herself. "If he had been, they would have thrown him overboard."

A minute later she heard a splash. The wounded man had leapt into the water, and was making for the shore.

"It is a fair race now," she thought. "Their canoe is a large one, as it held three sitters besides the rowers. Now I must take it steadily. I am sure they will not gain on me as long as I can keep up—it is just a question of last."

She rowed, however, her hardest for a few minutes, as it was all-important to get beyond the range of the Indians' guns. When a glance round showed her that she was some hundred and twenty yards ahead of her pursuers, she settled down into a long steady stroke. She knew well that she was now practically safe, for even if one of their guns could carry to her, it was difficult even for the best shot to aim from a dancing canoe. For half an hour there was no change in the position. The Indians were rowing their hardest, but the weight of their comparatively heavy canoe was telling upon them as much as the labour of driving her light craft was upon the girl. It was well for her that an out-of-door life and daily practice had hardened her muscles and

strengthened her frame. She had once paused for a couple of seconds and pulled off her frock, which at once cumbered her movements and was terribly hot. The speed of the canoe had scarcely slackened when the paddle was at work again, and she felt a sensible relief from the freedom of her limbs.

A few minutes later a little cry of joy broke from her as she saw the scow come out from behind a point some two miles away. The sight gave her renewed hope and strength. They must have left the village earlier than she had expected. On the other hand, a yell from the red-skins told her that they too had seen the scow, and would certainly exert themselves to the utmost to overtake her before she reached it. Although it had seemed that the paddlers were all doing their best before, the added speed of the canoes told that their exertions had been redoubled. When within a mile of the scow, the girl glanced backwards. The Indians had gained some thirty yards upon her; but another five minutes would bring her within rifle-shot of the scow. She could see by the motion of the oars that the rowers were doing their utmost, while the others were standing up watching the chase with their rifles in their hands.

Her strength was failing her fast now, but she

struggled on determinedly; at least she had saved her father and mother. Two minutes later she started at the report of a gun behind, and the splash of a ball in the water alongside the canoe. She felt that she was safe now. The red-skins would not have stopped to fire had they not felt that it was their last chance of revenge. A few more strokes and she looked round. The Indians were already on their way towards the shore. Then she let her paddle drop, and collapsed in the bottom of the canoe, hearing but faintly the sound of repeated shots from the scow, which was now but a little more than a quarter of a mile away. Hitherto they had been unable to fire, as the two canoes were in a line. Faintly she heard a shout in her father's voice: "Are you hit, Mary?" But she was incapable of making an effort to reply, and it was not until the scow came alongside and she was lifted on board that she was able to answer. The relief of her father and mother was intense when they found that she was unwounded. They had heard the Indians fire, and at the distance they were away it had seemed to them that the canoes were close to each other. They then saw the red-skins at once make for shore, and she had so quickly afterwards sunk into the canoe that they

greatly feared she was wounded. The men with them, however, were unanimous in agreeing that she had not been hit. If she had been, they argued, her pursuers would certainly have paddled up to the canoe and taken her scalp before making for the shore. It was some time before she was able to tell her story, and the frontiersmen were as warm in their expressions of admiration for her coolness as were her parents.

A consultation was now held as to the best plan to be pursued. It was finally agreed that one of the men should take the canoe and return to the village, which was but four miles away, and warn them to prepare for an attack that night. The stockades had already been strengthened, and if prepared, it was probable that the settlers would be able to beat off any attack. The scow was then put in motion again. It was felt that the three Indians on shore would have done nothing until they learned from the men in the canoe that the pursuit had failed, and that the settlers had been warned. They would probably have followed along the shore to see the result, and might either return, burn the cabin, and slaughter the cattle, or might go on and join the Indians who were doubtless gathered close to the village. The frontiersmen

were of opinion that they would take the latter course.

"The red-skins are fond of revenge," one of the men said, "but they are fonder of scalps. They will not expect to get much plunder from your house, and will certainly get no scalps; and though they might do a lot of mischief on your clearing, this would offer less satisfaction to them than getting their share of the plunder and scalps from the village."

"Besides," another put in, "they would certainly get into bad odour with their tribe if they were absent from the attack. I take it for certain that they had orders to go straight there, and that it was only the hope that they would bring in some scalps that induced them to land at your clearing. I think that it is plumb sure that they will go straight on."

Rowing vigorously, they reached the farm an hour before sunset. To their great satisfaction they saw the animals grazing as usual, the cabin intact, and no signs of an enemy's presence; nevertheless the frontiersmen advised Mr. Mitford to proceed cautiously, for it was just possible the Indians were hidden in the house. Accordingly he told his wife and daughter to remain in the scow.

which, when the men landed, was pushed off into deep water and the grapnel dropped. The men moved up through the trees until abreast of the house.

"I am convinced that they are not there," the settler said. "The animals are all feeding quietly, and the geese are just in front of the door. I am sure that if red-skins were inside, the horse and cattle would all be gathered by the water, and the geese, which are as watchful as dogs, would not be near the house."

The others agreed, and, stooping low, made their way through the standing grain until within some thirty yards of the house. Then with rifles advanced ready to fire, they dashed forward. Still all was quiet.

"They are not here," one of the men said positively. "They certainly would have fired, and not let us get up against the wall. We have only to walk in."

They went round to the door and entered. All was exactly as Mary had left it. The fire had burnt low, but the pot was still simmering over it. The farmer went down to the water and fetched up his wife and Mary.

"If it hadn't been for you, Mary," he said, "every-

thing would have been destroyed here, and we should be lying dead on the shore."

The question was next discussed what they had best do. The frontiersmen were unanimous in their opinion that there was no fear of an attack that night, but were equally certain that one would be made the next night, or at the latest on that following.

"No matter whether they take the village or not, they are sure to attack you. If they have won, the varmint you have baulked to-day will bring a party of their friends here for plunder and scalps. If they are beaten off they will, before they return home, ravage every outlying farm. To make matters sure, I should say it would be safest for your wife and daughter to sleep on board the scow. We can bring her in close to the shore and camp down there ourselves, so that, if needs be, we can get on board and put out into the lake. They have only one canoe, as far as we know; but if they had a dozen they would not dare to attack us. I do not think that there is a chance of any trouble to-night. In the morning, I should say your best plan would be to get the things you most value on board the scow, with enough meat and provisions to last for a week. You must stay with

the ladies on board, and we will drive all the animals a couple of miles into the forest. The worst that can happen then is that, when the Indians come, they will burn down the house. I don't see that we can prevent that. If we were to lay off here in the scow, we could keep them from approaching within range of our rifles, but we could not prevent them from coming down from behind the house.

"It does not matter about the cabin," the settler said; "that is easily put up again. And, indeed, I had intended before long to pull it down and rebuild it in better style, and put it close down by the water."

"That would be a good plan, boss. If you were to put it there, and make a strong palisade running from it on each side down to the water, you could fight it out against a big lot of red-skins, and if the worst came to the worst, could make off in your scow. I would put a bag or two of grain in the boat, if I were you, now. When you start in the morning, row along the shore to the east till you see us come out. We will bunch the animals close by there, and if we give them a feed every evening they are safe not to wander very far. It is not likely the red-skins will trouble to hunt for them;

they will burn your house and then make off. You might leave half a dozen of your sheep here. If they come, the Indians can make a meal, and they won't be wanting to search the woods for one, and are safe to make off without delay. When they have once got a beating they don't care to hang about; and if they have succeeded at the village, and got scalps and booty, some of them will at once start for home to have a dance after their victory, and the others will be off to strike a blow at some other village before the news of what has occurred reaches the settlers."

And so the matter was carried out. The night passed quietly, but in the morning the frontiersmen, putting their ears down to the surface of the lake, could make out heavy firing in the distance, and knew that the attack on the village had begun. The work was then set about. The whole of the feathered stock were tied by their legs and placed in the scow. The store of provisions, groceries, the linen, and clothes were all placed on board, and then the settler, with his wife and daughter, pushed off, while the three men drove the animals into the forest. Three hours later those on the scow saw them appear at the edge of the lake nearly three miles from the clearing, and the scow was at once

rowed ashore. The animals had been driven to a small clearing a quarter of a mile away, and on the party going up they were found to be still there. Mary went round petting them and giving them handfuls of grain, and after remaining there for half an hour they returned to the lake. The scow was hidden under some branches overhanging the water. In the afternoon a small canoe with a solitary paddler was seen coming along, keeping close inshore. As it approached, Mary recognized her canoe, and the men declared that the rower was their comrade who had gone to give the alarm to the village.

"What news, Reuben?" they shouted as soon as he was within hearing.

"Bad news," he said. "The village is taken, and every soul but myself murdered! They made a good fight, but the red-skins were too strong. I got hit in the leg pretty early in the fight, and, finding that I was no more use, I got two women to carry me down to the canoe. I knew that I should be as comfortable there as anywhere, and if things went wrong it gave me a chance. Two hours later I heard by the screaming that the red-skins had forced the palisades and were in the village, so I thought that it was time for me to be off. I was

able to sit up, though I was badly hit below the knee, and I paddled off and made for the clearing. When I got there I saw at once that all the animals were gone, and made sure that they had been driven into the forest, and that you had taken to the scow. I did not suppose that you had gone very far, so I came on looking for you, and glad enough I was to hear your shout."

"You fear that all in the village have been murdered?" Mr. Mitford said.

"I have not a doubt of it. Those red fiends spare no one, especially as there was a stout resistance, and a good many of them have been wiped out."

He was now helped out of the canoe. His comrades, all of whom had much experience of wounds, examined his leg carefully, and were of opinion that, although the bone was splintered, it was not broken, and that the ball had gone out behind.

"The best thing to do," one of them said, "will be to make a deep cut and pick out all the pieces of bone. It will never heal properly with them in."

"Fire away then!" the wounded man said coolly. "It is best to make a good job of it at once. Now I know that the bone is not really broken I don't mind what you do with it."

"Do you happen to have a new knife, Mr. Mitford?" one of the other frontiersmen said, turning to the settler. "One wants a new knife and a sharp one."

"I cannot give you a new one, but it was only yesterday that I ground my own knife, and it is both sharp and clean."

"That will do first rate."

And, taking the long knife the settler wore in a sheath hanging from his belt, he proceeded to operate. Not a groan or a sigh proceeded from the wounded man. Accustomed to a hard life as these men were, they were almost as insensible to pain as the Indians themselves. After the splinters of bone had been removed, the wound was washed with warm water and then carefully bandaged. A fire had by this time been lit a short distance in the forest in a position where its light could not be observed by any passing canoe. Here the men bivouacked, taking it by turns to keep watch. For four days they remained here; then one of them started as soon as it was dark, in Mary's canoe, to examine the clearing. He returned in little over an hour. The cabin and outbuildings had all been burnt, and the place was absolutely deserted. It was agreed that there was not the slightest chance of the Indians

returning there, and the settler and three of the men at once began to fell trees; while the fourth, who could not assist in active work for some time, went down in the canoe to the village, which he found had been entirely destroyed, but that a body of the State militia had arrived there. From them he learned that another village had been destroyed; but in an attack on a third the Indians had been repulsed with great loss, and had not since been heard of, and it was believed that they had retired to their own villages.

Three months later a log-house had been erected by the water-side, with palisades running down into deep water. It was large and comfortable, and being built of square logs and well loopholed, and with the doors and windows on the water-side only, it could resist a formidable attack. A very strong gate in one of the palisades would admit of the animals being driven in there for shelter. All those which had been taken into the forest had been recovered. The house done, the men set to work to enlarge the clearing, and ten years later it was one of the largest and best-cultivated farms on the lake. Mary, whose exploit had gained for her a wide reputation throughout the district for her courage and coolness, had long before married

a young Englishman who had come out with some capital, with the intention of farming. Mary would not hear of leaving her father and mother, and accordingly he entered into partnership with Mr. Mitford, and his energy and capital had no small share in developing the farm. A second log-house was built within some twenty yards of the other, and connected with it by a strong palisade. However, the settlers were never again disturbed by the Indians, and so many new-comers had settled beyond them that it could no longer be called an outlying settlement, especially as a town of considerable size had sprung into existence on the site of the village that had been destroyed.